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# Rural Economic Development Policy Making: Effecting Change Through Community Voices

Sonya Rae Albury-Crandall  
Clemson University, [sonya@g.clemson.edu](mailto:sonya@g.clemson.edu)

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RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY MAKING:  
EFFECTING CHANGE THROUGH  
“COMMUNITY VOICES”

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Policy Studies

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by  
Sonya R. Albury-Crandall  
May 2018

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Accepted by:  
Catherine Mobley, PhD, Committee Chair  
Lori Dickes, PhD, Co-Chair  
William Bridges, PhD  
Windsor Sherrill, PhD

## ABSTRACT

This research presents results from a doctoral study that explores a holistic approach to quantifying economic development. The mixed-methods study was conducted in four communities in Upstate South Carolina that have been part of the national Main Street Program. The study poses several important questions: What development strategies do the public value? What strategies contribute the most to the overall quality of life of the community? Further, what is the role of local leadership and accountability in facilitating revitalization, and how do they contribute to the overall quality of life in the community? Third, are there primary components of a community and economic development framework that can be utilized to mobilize community support around issues of community and economic development? These are the research questions that will be explored.

Many economists measure economic and social wellbeing solely on the financial metrics of private investment, job creation, and public resource and infrastructure improvements. Few, if any, study the most valued community attributes from the residents' perspectives. This exploratory research lays the foundation for gaining a better understanding of the types of development strategies the public values and the role of local leadership in facilitating public inclusion in policy-making.

Methods include archival data analysis, community focus groups, and an online survey. National key informant interviews focusing on state policy and leadership roles in economic development further inform the discussion. The three broad concepts of leadership, accountability, and community consensus building in the economic and community development process are also addressed. These concepts are familiar to the international development community (USÅID, 2013; OECD, 2007; and SIDA, 2014). The study also relies on participatory theory from Stiglitz (2002) as it pertains to sustainable development.

The research findings indicate that the public places a positive value on both traditional economic interventions and quality of life components in small cities and large towns. The findings also confirm that local leadership involvement is essential to economic and community vitality, and that the offering of incentives can help facilitate redevelopment. The focus group discussions confirmed that transparency and accountability are essential to building community trust, and that a common methodology or framework as developed through this research can be applied across multiple settings and communities. The research revealed that community members are willing and able to participate in an ongoing priority setting process for the future and that this is key to sustainable implementation of the policies employed by local leadership. Furthermore, each community espoused the benefits of placemaking, underscoring previous research (Knight Foundation, 2010; Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2016) that social attachment to a city is an important component of economic and community vitality, and that the engagement of policy makers in their leadership role is essential to mobilizing local rural communities towards revitalization.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the residents and business owners of the towns of Williamston, Laurens, Pickens, and Woodruff. They give of their time, energy, and talent to make their communities a better place to live, work and play. This document is also dedicated to the Main Street America program, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Formed in 1980, this organization was given independent status in 2013, and has helped organize, guide and inspire local communities to reinvent their downtowns for over 35 years. Through its leadership and partnership, these towns are able to not only engage in revitalizing their historic downtown commercial districts for local residents and businesses, but work toward becoming a destination place for visitors, and serve as national models for other communities facing similar circumstances and challenges.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research study would not have been possible without the leadership, insight and assistance from the following individuals. Beppie LeGrand, Statewide Coordinator of the South Carolina Main Street Program. She is the “glue” that helps create a cohesive outlook and direction throughout the statewide association. She guides the group towards the development of both collective and community-specific visions across all South Carolina Main Street programs, and shepherds us toward a more innovative and progressive future. I wish to also express my appreciation to Mayor Mack Durham of the town of Williamston, Jonathan Irick of the city of Laurens, Wilson Perkins of the city of Pickens, and Alyson Leslie of the city of Woodruff. Their leadership was instrumental in bringing together a wide array of individuals from all four towns as case study examples of what small towns with dedicated leadership and a clear vision for the future can accomplish.

This research also would not have been possible without the wholehearted support of the Envision Williamston board of directors and its chair, Roxanne Hall. Empowered by their insight and commitment to learning more about the community, I was able to pursue this important work that seeks to engage local residents and visitors throughout joint economic and placemaking endeavors. In the summer of 2017 alone, these dedicated volunteer leaders engaged over 1,200 people in better understanding the needs and wants of the community through a series of community-based surveys and interviews. This strong resolve to foster an ongoing participatory process ensures that revitalization efforts are guided through a truly public-driven and informed process for decision makers, planners and project leaders, all working together to effect sustainable change throughout the community.

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## INTRODUCTION

The "Community Voices" study uses a mixed-method case study approach to research economic and community vitality in four small rural towns in the Southeastern United States. The study seeks to determine the development strategies that the public values, both in terms of economic value but also as a public good and contribution to the overall quality of life in the community. Economic and community vitality is comprised of several components: financial/economic investment; physical capital; human capital; and social capital. In fact, it is not only the economy that connects residents to a place, but rather the social offerings, openness of the people, and aesthetics of the town that connects residents to a place (Hoke, 2016). However, many economists and researchers measure economic and social wellbeing based solely on traditional economic strategies that rely on financial metrics including private investment, job creation, and public resource and infrastructure improvements. Few of the current statistical data gathering approaches include measuring the most valued attributes of the community and what creates a true sense of place from the residents' perspective. Those that do often focus on a particular aspect of quality of life, such as arts and culture, or walkability, rather than uniting all of these aspects all together in a meaningful and manageable way.

This study focuses on key community and economic development priorities for small rural communities. As rural communities struggle to grow and prosper across the United States, this study uses several research processes to further expand our knowledge of rural economic development and explore the use of practical standardized, yet flexible tools for possible replication and application in small cities across the country.

This exploratory research used a holistic approach to understand of the types of development strategies that the public values and the role of local leadership in facilitating the inclusion of these strategies at the local level. As such, the research is designed to address the

three broad concepts of leadership, accountability/transparency, and community consensus building/participation in the economic and community development process. These concepts are most utilized in the international development community (USAID, 2013; OECD, 2007; SIDA, 2014). The current study applies these concepts to economic development and placemaking in the Southeastern United States. The study also relies on participatory theory from Stiglitz (2002) and others (Hamdi, 2010; Schupbach, 2015; Prakash Kelkar & Spinelli, 2016; Redaelli, 2016; Salzman & Yerace, 2017; Winther, 2017) as it pertains to sustainable economic development. As applied in the Community Voices study, this approach advances an ongoing participatory process and incorporates the development and articulation of transformational strategies and the measurement of goal attainment for sustainable community development. It shares evidence that supports diverse community participation and the addition of locally articulated cultural, health and wellness, and placemaking measures for achieving economic success. Communities contemplating their initial planning efforts, as well as those in the early stages of revitalization and redevelopment, will benefit from learning about the unique data collection strategies, shared rural challenges, and potential revitalization strategies that they can implement in their own communities. The study also advances theoretical understanding of creative placemaking by expanding its scope beyond the creative arts and how it can help build social capital and contribute to economic and community development.

During this study I sought to address the needs of communities in distress who are seeking revitalization through economic and community development initiatives so that other communities can learn from their experiences and successes. The study will seek to answer key questions such as, what is “economic vitality”? What will improve a rural community’s quality of life? In addition, what initiatives will add the greatest value to a community, by yielding the highest return on investment? These are some of the questions that will be explored in this study

of four small rural towns in South Carolina.

The three main research questions:

1. What development strategies does the public value? What strategies contribute the most to the overall quality of life in the community?
2. What is the role of local leadership and accountability in facilitating revitalization, and how do they contribute to the overall quality of life in the community?
3. Are there primary components of a community and economic development framework that can be utilized to mobilize community support around issues of community and economic development?

The hypotheses for the study are:

1. The public places a positive value on both traditional economic interventions and quality of life components. (Research Question [RQ] 1)
2. Local leadership involvement is essential to economic and community vitality. (RQ2)
3. The offering of incentives is an important tool for leadership to employ in facilitating economic and community vitality. (RQ2)
4. Transparency in economic development helps support sustainability. (RQ2)
5. Rural communities share common challenges that can be addressed through the construction of a logical framework for mobilizing a city seeking revitalization. (RQ3)

These hypotheses relate to two distinctive types of theory. Traditional economic development theory focuses on the physical characteristics of the place. It encompasses a variety of theories of which Product Cycle Theory, Central Place Theory, and Location Theory are among these more traditional approaches. More recently, the theory of Placemaking and integration of the arts into community development originates from the field of community planning and architecture (Whyte, 1956; Jacobs, 1969; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). This theory

establishes placemaking as one of the fundamental and essential elements of neighborhoods and communities; without these components of aesthetics and intrinsic value, the essential elements of neighborhoods would not remain. Expressed in the literature in economic and regional development, other theorists underscore the importance of community interventions, especially in relation to the priorities established and whether the goals focus on people, place, or both (Ladd, 1994; Shaffer, et al., 2004). If not satisfied with the quality of amenities that meet their desires and needs, residents may alternatively, “vote with their feet” and find another community that is more closely aligned with their preferences, providing a good value for the price that they pay for services and amenities (Tiebout, 1956). Added to these theories is the role of formal inducements or incentives (Bernard, 2005), as well as active and sustained civic engagement to facilitate the process (Shaffer, et al., 2004; and Stiglitz, 2002). Moreover, communities are seeking sustainable economic development, not simply short-term gains or population growth alone. They wish to strike a balance between economic development and the sustainable management of their cultural assets (Lazarevic, Koruznjak, & Devetakovic, 2016). However, sustainable development is a highly equivocal term. In the context of rural communities, a sustainable rural community requires a holistic approach to account for the heterogeneity of interests and the inter and intra-community variations among places (Winther, 2017).

A mixed-methods approach was employed for this study on economic and community vitality. The research included archival data review and community-based focus groups in all four communities (Laurens, Pickens, Williamston, and Woodruff), a community survey of town residents in one community (Williamston). These communities are located near the I-85 corridor / megalopolis stretching from Charlotte to Atlanta and comprise one of the leading growth areas in the country. To provide context, key informant interviews were also held with leaders of the National Main Street Center Leadership Council as part of the Main Street America movement.

This research is timely in that these states and regions are seeking best practices in how to revitalize their downtown commercial centers and become destination communities for visitors, residents and entrepreneurial investments.

Preliminary research was presented at the Southern Political Science Association meeting held in New Orleans on January 4, 2018. Participants at SPSA had the opportunity to comment, consider possible policy solutions, and propose future research. Together, these methods achieve scientific rigor (reliability and validity), are able to provide both a quantitative and qualitative understanding of the issues and community perspectives on economic and community vitality, and allow for the inclusion of a wide array of participants at the local, regional, and national levels. Taken together, these findings are explored within the context of creative placemaking and applied to possible solutions for future economic development and policy making within the rural development literature, as it applies to smaller communities and cities.



## CHAPTER ONE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Historical Context of Rural Communities and Downtown Revitalization

The concept of revitalizing local downtowns and preserving natural, historical, and cultural amenities is undergoing a renaissance. While the need for downtown preservation and revitalization is not new, the desire to reconnect with a local place, build social connections, and find a home for livability rather than a job, is stronger than ever before, and growing (Speck, 2012, p. 21). The movement, in its early stages, was born out of need due to the industrial age, but has been gaining in momentum. People are no longer dependent on local employment on the farm or indigenous markets. Transportation improvements and enhanced roadways systems have enabled residents clustered in the inner cities to move out to the suburbs (Glaeser & Kohlhase, 2003). Over the years, this tide has shifted again. Now, Millennials have a new urban desire to reside in America's urban cores, often without a car and a new sense of freedom, setting the pace for greater choice, flexibility and personal autonomy (Speck, 2012).

Since the 1940s, nearly all urban growth has actually been suburban (Montgomery, 2013, p. 13). Initially, the expansion to live outside the city's central core was able to offer residents more space and larger homes, but over time led to urban sprawl and a host of unintended consequences. People found themselves driving longer distances for employment opportunities and shopping, only to return to their suburban neighborhoods in the evenings and on weekends to escape the hectic pace. Moreover, suburban living also helped to create a more stressful lifestyle, and introduced a level of social isolation and diminished safety and security due to lower population density and residents' frequent absences from their homes. By 2000, Putnam warned about the loss of social connections and a shrinking social network (Montgomery, 2013, p. 54). As time passed, it became increasingly apparent that while originally appealing in concept, many

suburbanites learned that they gained more living space at a very high price. Originally appealing to preferences for privacy, mobility, and less density, these preferences had a very high tradeoff (Montgomery, 2013, p. 29). Suburban residents lost some of that feeling of community of living in a denser neighborhood, were spending more and more time on the road commuting, and no longer enjoyed that “sense of place” that many grew up with while living, working, and playing in small towns. That sense of place is people’s subjective perceptions of the environment and their conscious feelings, where one’s feelings are fused together within the context their environment (Pfefferle, 2015). According to Robertson (2004), having a distinctive sense of place is especially important to small cities. He argued that it is “vital to the health and prosperity of a downtown” and is one its chief assets (Pfefferle, 2015, p. 18).

At the same time that widespread suburbanization occurred, the economy was undergoing significant shifts. The industrialization of America had brought economic prosperity to many rural communities. Coal mining and manufacturing plants, in particular, supported the development of multiple small to mid-sized towns across the country at the turn of the century and on through WWII. The jobs created attracted a variety of goods and services, and the establishment of churches and civic groups throughout these communities. But, the post-industrialization period brought significant shifts and by the 1980s, business leaders began to invest in the suburban lifestyle, leaving these once central areas to be largely populated by the less affluent, who were often unable to relocate out to the edges of town, due to the high cost of moving (Fennell, in Fischel, 2006, p.178). This gradual loss of revenue and investment, led to what Krugman (1995) describes as the “cumulative causation” of decline. As a result, the centrifugal forces of change pushed out economic activity away from the city center, leaving these formerly thriving downtown areas to deteriorate and decline.

Compounding the situation further, long-distance transportation and communication costs substantially declined, and the forces of globalization placed immense pressure on businesses across the United States. To compete in the emerging global economy, firms engaged in massive consolidations and outsourcing, resulting in widespread job displacement, especially striking these small cities and towns during the late 1980s and beyond, and again at the onset of the 2008 Great Recession. The result was, and has been, that many of these formerly thriving small towns were unable to adjust to the severe and often abrupt changes. Factories were closed, families relocated, local businesses and churches struggled to keep their doors open, and a plethora of communities suffered severe economic decline. As Davies (1998) described in his book on small town America, the demographic shifts had been predicted for much of the twentieth century (p. 3). The modern America with its thriving urban culture had begun to pass these small towns by, and their once thriving past is only remembered through the visible abandoned railroad lines, old mills, and deteriorating downtown buildings. They are left with shrinking and increasingly older populations, and even poorer neighborhoods. Their once flourishing business districts are often devoid of young people, diminished political clout, and fading economic viability (Davies, 1998, p. 3).

The impact of negative economic shocks can have severe consequences if repeated over multiple times like it has in these rural communities. “Slow motion shocks” happen over time, creating a cumulative effect, similar to a larger disaster (Besser, Recker, & Agnitsch, 2008, p. 580). Small towns in particular are more likely to experience significant consequences of these shocks than would be less noticed in a metropolitan area (Besser, Recker, & Agnitsch, 2008). Negative shocks have indirect consequences as well. Coupled with the loss of jobs and the decline in wages, negative shocks have often led to social upheaval, falling tax revenue, and rising crime rates, leading to severe economic and social distress (Glaeser, 2011, p. 52).

The reverse cause for hope, however, is that small, incremental change can improve the community with significant effects if introduced over time (Besser, Recker, & Agnitsch, 2008). Moreover, small towns can recover from negative shocks such as “corporate globalization” (Sumner, 2005) by refocusing away from “money-values” to focus on “life-values” (Depew, 2006, p. 540). This newer theoretical model helps communities reorient themselves toward a life of the “civil commons” building strong schools, farmers’ markets, and cooperatives of civic life (Depew, 2006, p. 540).

Along these lines, many small towns have sought to capitalize on their unique geographic or ethnic character to help reverse these bad fortunes (Davies, 1998, p. 189). However, they have had mixed success, and many central business districts are in such advanced states of distress that the investment required would be significant. As a result, many of the old brick buildings sit empty, devoid of economic life. Multiple types of visible distress abound including faded “for sale” signs, residential homes in need of paint, dilapidated buildings, abandoned automobiles, all contributing to an assemblage of clutter reflecting years of inattention to appearances (Davies, 1998, p.193). Yet, despite these challenges, many of America’s small towns have not given up hope. The daunting negative forces and lack of economic activity are unable to dissuade some local merchants and leaders who remain hopeful and inspired. Churches and other community groups provide a haven for social life and there is guarded optimism about the future. Nonetheless, the question remains, which towns will find their small niche and thrive again, and which will merely survive on the margins, in the shadows of American life? (Davies, 1998, p. 195).

#### Why Focus on Rural Communities?

Many qualitative case studies have been compiled on small town success stories, and these studies show that the most successful towns have high levels of engagement and

transparency. For example, in a recent book on rural America, Cynthia Duncan (2014) paints a lively portrait of what has been accomplished in the community of Gray Mountain, a village in rural New England. Rich in social capital since the 1900s, this isolated town has developed a spirit of widespread trust, inclusive participation, and a long-time investment in community groups. When economic challenges emerged, in the late 1980s, however, the residents came together to debate and challenge one another, but also formulate a responsive program or strategy to address their problems (Duncan, 2014, p. 190). They helped poor young adults find training and work, addressed a rising teen pregnancy problem, and developed youth and recreational leagues to support their quality of life. They reached out to struggling families from “the end of the road” so that all could participate and come together to protect and revitalize their community as a collective (Duncan, 2014, p. 190). These patterns of inclusive, participatory governance and community reinvestment characterize the type of revitalization that can transform a community and serve as an outstanding example of what struggling communities can do to improve their quality of life in the face of economic hardship (Duncan, 2014, pp. 189-190). In contrast, two other former mill towns described in her book had comparatively little change or social development, while government leadership maintained a separatist and distant approach, unable to recover from its economic decline.

The qualitative findings such as those discussed by Davies (1998), Duncan (2014) and others (Pink, 2008; Dewitt, 2015), add value by highlighting the richness of these community interactions. Each expresses the challenges these small towns face, using in-depth and rich case studies to characterize and describe the economic climate and unique culture of these towns in their studies. And yet, quantitative research on what small towns have accomplished is scant. An exception is found in a North Carolina study on the role of local government in economic development (Morgan, 2009). The authors explored approaches to economic development

between cities (population 10,000+) and smaller towns (population <10,000 residents). Given the constraints of small towns in terms of capacity and resources, it was posited that their approach to economic development could be both qualitatively and quantitatively different than that of larger jurisdictions. Using a mail survey of 217 (response rate = 33%); the researchers were able to observe differences between larger and smaller communities (Morgan, 2009, p. 3). Smaller communities tend to focus on four main areas: manufacturing, tourism and retail sales, residential development, and the attraction of higher tech industries. After manufacturing, larger cities, on the other hand, give greater weight to high tech industrial recruitment, followed by tourism, and warehouses and distribution center development, and lastly residential. While rural areas must consider residential growth as an important part of their economic activity, it also creates high demands on local government. The increased need for utilities, schools and law enforcement can strain and sometimes outpace the local government's ability to provide the town with all the necessary services based on residential growth alone. Research from the North Carolina study indicates that, in general, residential development does not generate a commensurate level of revenue to pay for the cost of services it requires (Morgan, 2009). Conversely, commercial and industrial development usually pays for themselves, and has a net gain. Thus, in bedroom communities such as those in this study, where residents commute to work, it can be a challenge to capture a more diversified tax base to support the local economy. Moreover, consumer patterns compound the market leakage that occurs, because workers often purchase goods near their place of employment due to convenience and access to a broad array of service and retail options in larger markets.

With this in mind, without proper planning and public policies to support their plans, isolated communities may grow in population size, but not be able to develop the commensurate services and amenities they need to serve the population. Moreover, the political and economic

forces in surrounding metropolitan and unincorporated areas often compete with them to capture this new industry. Small communities, therefore, may not be able to gain the much-needed new market share without an integrated, planned approach that addresses the full range of quality of life needs of their residents. Morgan (2009) argues that by accessing information on strategic planning, best practices, and an economic/fiscal impact analysis communities can begin to address the broad range of quality of life needs for their community and provide a sound basis for informed decision-making (p. 13).

#### Quality of Life Foci

In view of quality of life considerations, the landmark international study on happiness, World Happiness Report, is a United Nations study of more than 3,000 respondents globally who were asked to rate their quality of life (Helliwell, et al., 2016). Started in 2012, measures of happiness and quality of life are increasingly being considered as critical discussion points to understand individual and community wellbeing across nations (Helliwell, et al., 2016, p. 1). Using a “Quality of Life Ladder” they were able to assess what levels of happiness the local residents experienced, rate the contributing factors to achieving happiness, and develop some directions for the future. Based on the report findings, the population distribution centered around the median of 5, on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 having the highest quality of life. The population weighted mean score was 5.4, providing a normative benchmark with variances across regions and countries. Six factors influence these happiness scores: 1) GDP per capita or income; 2) healthy years of life expectancy; 3) social support (as characterized by having someone to rely upon in difficult times); 4) trust (as measured by the lack of corruption in government or businesses); 5) freedom to make one’s own decisions; and 6) generosity or giving nature. The top three influential items for happiness were having someone to rely upon in times of trouble, wealth or income, and personal health. New research also suggests that people are significantly happier

with their quality of life when there are more equal distributions of happiness and wellbeing (Helliwell, et al., 2016, p. 7). This observation further advances the need for social cohesion and the extension of support to all members of the community when seeking revitalization, underscoring an “apparent preference for equality of happiness” (Helliwell, et al., 2016, p. 6).

In a related study the Knight Foundation (2010) identifies attachment to the community as a primary metric. Attachment is correlated to Gross Domestic Product growth and can be viewed as a major indicator of economic and social wellbeing. The study engaged 43,000 individuals from 26 communities across the United States. The findings indicate that emotional attachment to a community is most likely to occur when there are many social offerings, there is a spirit of openness, and there is a pleasing aesthetic in town. These findings specifically relate to towns that have a vibrant nightlife, care about each other, and have a variety of social, arts and cultural events. In terms of openness, the town is perceived to be a good place for both families and older populations as well as a good place for diverse groups and young adults just starting out. Aesthetically, there are beautiful parks, trails and playgrounds and a general overall pleasing appearance to the city. Trails are an especially important asset to those who use them, and can boost the economy, through trail-related tourism expenditures (Bowker, Bergstrom, & Gill, 2007). Other important factors to having strong community ties include offering a good educational system, provision of basic infrastructure and services, strong leadership, a thriving economy, and good public safety (Knight Foundation, 2010).

Another important study indicates that one of the strongest predictors of community attachment is the “quality of neighboring,” reflecting the social and interactive components of social and community attachment (Sundblad & Sapp, 2011, p. 530). The social bond to the community is enhanced through having strong ties to neighbors and friends, from which communities can build through activities such as clubs, neighborhood organizations, cleanup



days, town-wide scavenger hunts, block parties, and other community events and festivals. The key is to encourage less active participants to become involved so that greater levels of attachment can be generated among all residents (Sunblad & Sapp, 2011, p. 531).

Taken together, these studies suggest that communities, like those included in this research, must take a holistic approach to economic development lest they face the same fate as other societies that experienced rapid growth, but at the cost of rising inequality, social exclusion, and damage to the natural environment. A balanced and integrated approach can assist communities in achieving higher levels of wellbeing for current and future generations. Public policies that focus on economic, social, and environmental objectives in an integrated manner can help to ensure that approaches focused solely on population growth, job creation or business growth, are held in check. As they must be coupled with democratic, participatory processes, these inclusionary approaches reinforce social cohesion and support open and transparent governance as a means to sustainable economic growth (Stiglitz, 2002, pp.169-175). In addition, if small cities wish to track their progress, impact measures will require a broad range of variables that support the many aspects of wellbeing as well as overall measures of happiness and economic prosperity (Helliwell, et al., 2016).

#### The National Main Street Program

In an era when many people had given up on the commercial and cultural viability of small towns, a national movement was born. Called “Main Street America,” this program was launched over 35 years ago to help revitalize older and historic commercial districts across the United States. It’s now a network of more than 1,600 neighborhoods and communities, both rural and urban, that share a commitment to place and renewal (Smith & Bloom, 2017, p. 2). At the heart of the desired transformational development for these small towns and cities is the belief that communities should be empowered to set their own destinies. While challenging work, the

Main Street program offers a roadmap for creating locally owned and community-driven prosperity (Smith & Bloom, 2017, p. 5).

The National Main Street Center begins by focusing on the central business core, helping local communities create plans and initiatives that lead to the preservation and revitalization of their traditional downtown and commercial districts. A central component of this effort is the Main Street Four Point Approach ©. It is designed to provide an organized framework for all affiliated Main Street programs. Thus far, more than 2,000 communities across the country have participated in the network. Collectively, from 1980-2016, these communities have rehabilitated 268,053 buildings, created 584,422 jobs, and fostered investments totaling over 70 billion dollars (National Main Street Center, 2017).

The Main Street program's four-point approach to economic and community revitalization includes: 1) organization; 2) promotion; 3) design; and 4) economic restructuring. The first point emphasizes building a strong foundation, including cultivating partnerships, recruiting a strong volunteer base, and identifying resources. The second focuses on promoting the local assets of the Main Street community, especially its downtown commercial district as the hub of activity. The third concentrates on the overall design aspects of the town in order to create a welcoming and aesthetically pleasing environment for visitors and residents. The fourth centers on encouraging and attracting new businesses and facilitating the economic revitalization of the town. This revitalization is achieved through the introduction of capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to facilitate program development and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators to drive local economics (Smith & Bloom, 2017, p. 4). This Community Voices study addresses all of these main points by involving Main Street programs in the research and includes interventions related to these four areas of activity.

Despite the Main Street program's measurable impacts and widespread acceptance as a viable method to revitalization, the Main Street approach has been employed with varying degrees of success across the country. The structure of organizing around the four areas of organization, promotion, economic restructuring, and design has come under scrutiny for its applicability in today's technologically driven and market-based economy. To illustrate, a study of the four-point approach was undertaken in 2001-2002 (Robertson, 2004). It included a national survey (n=40) and four case study communities located in St. Charles, Illinois; Danville, Kentucky; Tupelo, Mississippi; and Cushing, Oklahoma. While no one area utilized the four-point approach uniformly, each community was able to tailor it to fit their own unique situation. A common theme, however, was that promotional activities were consistently the most emphasized component (36.7%), followed by design (22.1%), organization (21.2%), and economic restructuring (19.9%) (Robertson, 2004, pp. 60-61). When analyzed by age of the program, newer programs tended to naturally focus on organizational issues and the look and feel of the town through design. Yet, most programs evolved over time (Smith, 1996), and for the more established programs, promotional activities tended to dominate. In fact, 70% of all programs reported that promotion was the most frequently used component or tied for first, and was especially prominent when the program was located near a large city (Robertson, 2004, pp. 61-62).

These results underscore the importance of marketing the assets of a small city to a wider audience. However, the survey findings and interviews also indicate that economic development and restructuring is the least utilized of all the four components. Thus, while the Main Street Program is using conventional measures to gauge its success, such as public/private investments, job creation, and building rehabilitation, the programs are actually focusing on promotional elements rather than directly on economic development and restructuring. These economic

restructuring strategies tend to be more complex, require more outside expertise, and involve multiple stakeholders and external forces beyond the immediate control of the Main Street program. Conversely, Main Street employees indicate that promotion of special events and festivals tend to be the most effective on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest rating, and can be accomplished at a relatively lower cost (Robertson, 2004).

While the program has had a somewhat uneven application according to the four-point approach, the “Main Street approach,” remains arguably the most widely applied and effective method used for downtown revitalization in the country due its recognition and visible changes that have occurred over time (Kimmel and Schoening, 2011, p. 5; Robertson, 2004, p. 56; Keister, 1990; and Pfefferle, 2015, p. 7). Furthermore, this approach is currently being revised and modernized. Seeking to expand its reach and diversify their services, the National Main Street Center has undertaken an internal evaluation using a “refresh” assessment process (National Main Street Center, 2017). As a result, the program is still tethered to its original purpose and principals. However, the newly refreshed model has relabeled the four-point approach as tools or activities for revitalization, rather than its core functions. The Main Street programs actively pursuing revitalization nationwide now focus on five main strategies: 1) developing a vision for the future by its Main Street leadership, 2) understanding its market, 3) developing “transformation strategies” that will help them reach one to three key goals for a specific set of stakeholders and/or a focused area of impact, 4) proceeding to implementation, and 5) performing both quantitative and qualitative evaluations (Smith & Bloom, 2017, p. 7). The transformational strategies should be action-oriented and measurable so that change can be tracked and accounted for as it occurs (see Appendix A).

This new development in the Main Street movement recognizes its past, while embracing the future toward a more flexible, rigorous and accountable pattern of revitalization. It also raises

a challenge for program leaders at the national and state levels. Many communities resist change, a necessary component for growth and development. And, when visible change occurs, some local residents and community leaders may find the transformation of the community threatening. However, if open communication is maintained with the public, the concerns of others may “not only be heard, but also addressed” (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 168). This dialogue will allow for the resistance to dissipate and legitimate concerns can be addressed in a timely manner so that more efficient outcomes can be realized. As such, stakeholder engagement and open transparent communication has been shown to result in not only fairer processes but also stronger social cohesion, capacity building, and better communications, creating a greater sense of trust and civic responsibility (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 170-178). Change then, is at the center of transformational strategies and transformational development. Leaders who promote inclusion and accountability help foster this change, and make it more acceptable (National Main Street Center, 2017).

While still in the rollout phase of the new Main Street transformation strategies approach, it is still uncertain whether this approach will be able to successfully foster strong attachments to downtown districts or larger communities. Many acknowledge that it is important to create an economically healthy downtown, but it is also equally important to engage in community building, so that members have affection for their downtown and will want to visit it. In his recent work in Oregon, Drew Pfefferle (2015) asserts that for a downtown to be successful, a truly revitalized downtown recaptures the community’s interest and fondness by “highlighting its unique features and creating an experience that can’t be replicated anywhere else” (p. 3). Such an approach applies both to residents and visitors alike, who are provided with a novel experience that they can identify with, creating a unique sense of place. Thus, in order for downtowns and rural communities to be vibrant and successful, community members and visitors must be provided with a distinct sense of place. In doing so, they will begin to identify with the town,

form an attachment to it, and through greater awareness and their own unique positive experiences, create a desire to frequent the area more often (Pfefferle, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, while a strong sense of place is vital, it cannot be accomplished without dedicated leadership to create the elements essential to these areas. These elements include creating a distinct environment, a sense of history and heritage, the presence of multifunctional spaces, a pedestrian friendly environment, and a wide variety of opportunities for activity and encouragement to linger, and stay awhile, so that the community has a sense of ownership and commitment to their downtown area ((Pfefferle, 2015, pp. 8-9). These communities will offer unique features that people will want to become attached to, deriving the benefits that come from being a part of an inimitable community.

### Leadership

How can a small city or town foster this place attachment? According to Schultz (2004), one of the “7 1/2 keys” to big success in small towns is to educate and train a strong core of leaders. These include not only the mayor and town council members, but also a wide array of people from a variety of sectors including business, government, education, healthcare, and faith communities (Schultz, 2004, p. 69). In his work on stakeholder assessment of competent leaders, Stumpf (2010) goes further by identifying eight competency areas for career success that can be extended to leaders within the Main Street programs. The five factors that are the strongest predictors of success are buy-in and commitment of others, effective use of resources, and the fostering of innovation and learning, closely followed by trust and modeling ethical behavior, as well as embracing change with confidence and courage. Based on his research, these are the five predictors of success that are most meaningful (Stumpf, 2010, p. 471).

Ward (2017) states, “Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards a common goal” (p. 1). It captures the essential components of being able to inspire others and

work towards a common vision or strategic goal as a team. The leader then must be able to communicate those ideas in a way that engages team members enough to commit to an action in the way the leader desires. In doing so, the leader becomes the “inspiration and director of the action” possessing the combination of personality and leadership skills that make others respond to his/her call (Ward, 2017, p. 1).

Comparing Ward’s interpretation of leadership to the business world, the most “effective leaders” are those who can increase the company’s financial strength. Nonetheless, it is not solely about profitability. Non-profit boards may have other economic goals such as developing a smooth and efficient service system, or achieving measurable change in a desired programmatic goal, such as an increase in job training graduates or positive health outcomes. A local government program may desire to see an increase in new business starts, lower crime rates, improved zoning standards, growth in visitor attraction, or new residential development. An economic and community development team may wish to focus on goal-oriented placemaking and projects that encourage community participation, connections, and pride in one’s community as the end goals (Lew, 2017).

Anderson (2012) believes that leadership capacity follows the structure of a bell curve. According to Anderson, even leaders with a modicum of innate leadership can develop their skillset to become good or great leaders. Even those who started out as poor leaders have been able to build their capacity to lead and eventually persuaded millions to follow a suggested course of action. As such, any leader needs to be a good manager of the resources at his/her disposal, but a leader must go beyond this. A leader needs to be a strong communicator and have the ability to inspire others while shepherding the team towards the desired goal. In rural areas, leadership is key to bringing economic prosperity to a community (Sumners, 2012, p. 2). Leaders must be able to effectively engage the citizenry in a meaningful way that doesn’t rely on style

alone. Some most widely recognized traits and activities of successful leaders are included in Appendix B. In this brief overview, the differences are pronounced, with some scholarly authors focusing on traits, others on skills, and still others on a balance of both (Schultz, 2004; Carmela, 2017; Economy, 2014; Ward, 2017; Maxwell, 2007).

While all of these works on leadership focus on the individual leader, they miss one essential element: the importance of recognizing that local leaders must often work together to achieve their desired results. Sumners (2012) recommends a multiplicity of leaders. He proposed that the “high achieving community is ‘leaderful’ – that is, many provide some measure of leadership” (p. 4). To support shared leadership, formal leaders must serve, “not as gatekeepers, but as door openers” – leading toward an ever-widening level of civic participation (Sumners, 2012, p. 4). Research on leading in clusters has recognized this need and calls for better strategic leadership among inter-organizational arrangements such as through strategic alliances, public-private partnerships or regional clusters (Sydow et al., 2011). This approach to understanding leadership is particularly important to small communities that often must work in collaborative partnerships to finance and lead their local revitalization efforts. Moreover, small communities can no longer rely on facilitators as experts hired to galvanize a community for social and economic development (Sorensen & Epps, 1996). Marsden (2016) argues that sustainable placemaking requires more “reflexive governance” processes (p. 601). Local leaders need to create multiple pathways for inclusiveness and representation, bringing in a wider vector of knowledge and expertise (from both within and outside of the community) to leverage a broader network of people and solutions. Increasingly the pace and form of development will also require frequent short-term initiatives with several modifications. Referred to as “strategic doing” this new approach requires local leaders to engage in ongoing community engagement and strategic



collaborations throughout the project implementation process, fostering a continuous process of leading and “learning by doing” (Morrison, 2013, pp. 13-20).

### Citizen Engagement in Revitalization

The lens of economic growth and its relationship to democratic principles offers a useful perspective for leading a community through positive revitalization. The principle of democracy (inclusion or participatory government) has often been juxtaposed with economic growth.

Following World War II, Paul Samuelson, a noted economist, espoused that there is a “tradeoff between democracy and growth” (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 163). Next came the rise of the Soviet Union and its domestic growth at the cost of basic rights, followed by the success of East Asia during the 1960s and 1970s (Stiglitz, 2002). While this economic growth pattern was also lacking in adherence to full participatory democratic principles, these changes did herald significant economic change. As such, the relationship between growth and participatory government was initially accepted as a theoretical observation and many believed that exercising democratic principles may inhibit the trajectory and speed of economic growth (Stiglitz, 2002).

However, further investigation using cross-sectional data and times series analysis showed that the causality between growth and democracy could not be clearly established. Moreover, if democracy is a “luxury good” then individuals from higher income backgrounds would want more of this “luxury” not less (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 163). Interactional approaches to community development show that building trust is key to helping community members more fully govern their projects according to their values and interests. Yet, without engagement of local leadership, these efforts may deteriorate. As such, both aspects are needed, leadership and community engagement (Pavey, Muth, Ostermeier, & Davis, 2007). In addition, as demographics change throughout the country and rural communities become more diversified, these changes

will bring an enriched multicultural arena, requiring a “new kind of democratic politics, more participatory and deliberative” (Balassiano & Maldonado, 2014, p. 657).

Thus, contrary to previously held beliefs, the data suggest that there is not a clear tradeoff between democracy and economic growth as once envisioned and that governments or leaders striving for openness and participation need not fear that democratic engagement of the public will hamper their development. To the contrary, when considering the factors that will contribute to long-term economic growth, Stiglitz (2002) proposes that broad participatory processes actually promote growth that is sustainable. When open, participatory processes are applied, leaders are more likely to design policies that lead to long-term economic growth and reinforce the strength of those democratic methods themselves. Referred to as the “comprehensive development paradigm,” Stiglitz (2002) asserts that lasting development requires a transformative movement that permeates all economic levels, not just among the elite; thus, the mindset toward a “developed economy” must extend to participation that encompasses consensus building, transparency, openness, and voice in both public and corporate settings (p. 165).

The gaps in the literature that this research hopes to address include exploring what local community members can do to promote economic and community revitalization using a holistic approach rather than in silos or a set of traditional economic development strategies alone. Second, it will also fill a gap of how this can be accomplished in a participatory way, and assure that there is accountability. It will also add to the literature in rural and community development on the critical need for participatory community processes in community and economic development planning and implementation. Third, the Community Voices study explores if there are any tools that can be applied to help focus that effort. Within small communities there is a true ecology of place or intersection of the relationships between people, their environment, and cultural meaning (Relph, 2017). Thus, a standardized tool needs to be created that that allows a

community to pull from a broad array of targeted strategies, but also flexible enough for them to tailor it to their area so that it is meaningful to them and reflective of their unique setting.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORY

#### Traditional Economic Development Theory

Several traditional economic theories have been used in economic development practice.

Three of the most salient for this study on rural communities include: Product Cycle Theory, Central Place Theory, and Location Theory.

In the Product Cycle Theory, the economic profiles of communities are divided into three phases: youthful, mature, and old age. In the youthful phase there is an urban bias as well-educated and flexible workforces are more likely to locate in urban areas. Firms also need capital during the start-up phases and capital equity lenders or angel investors are more likely to concentrate in these areas. This urban bias is also a boon for cities during the mature or high growth period. There is usually strong employment growth and a “multiplier effect” as other firms and suppliers co-locate in the area, bringing a group of interrelated projects and services together (Stimson, Stough, & Roberts, 2006, p. 23). Then as the company ages, old age firms tend to locate in rural areas. They prefer rural economies because labor is cheaper, land is less costly, and growth has slowed to the maintenance phase. This latter stage has traditionally included textiles, apparels, and furniture manufacturing. There is also the branch plant phenomenon as companies move out from the city-center to provide greater access to a wider market. As such, the rapid globalization and offshoring of assembly work has translated into significant loss of manufacturing jobs for nonurban areas. South Carolina on the whole, is particularly affected by this trend, as only 15 of 46 counties in the state are considered urban; the rest are rural (South Carolina Rural Health Report, 2011). The product cycle may have also sped up in recent years with globalization and offshoring, transportation improvements, advances in information technology, and banking consolidations. This results in increased efficiency for the producer, but

also leads to Schumpeter's (1947) "creative destruction" for small rural areas and towns (Blakely & Leigh, 2010, p. 6).

The Central Place Theory incorporates a "threshold demand" for different commodities as an indicator for how and where cities develop and thrive. Since different products require different population levels to support the provision of goods and services, some services will be of a higher order and others of a lower order. Higher order services such as a hospital require a larger population base. Some of lower order, on the other hand, only require a few hundred people, e.g., a bar, gas station, or convenience store. This phenomenon serves to create a market hierarchy whereby a rural population center will start as a hamlet with a few small businesses. As a system of hamlets coalesce, they can evolve into a village and support more services such as a clothing store. Eventually, they build from a series of villages, to towns, to a city, and then sometimes to a primary city. These higher order cities will have a sufficient population base to support the technological and personnel needs of these higher order services that may include a tertiary hospital, a major sports team, or an opera for example. In terms of locational advantage, central place theory is a useful way of explaining the location of towns and cities with no major geographical barriers such as a waterway or major highway. It can also suggest where future growth might likely occur. Further, it also explains why smaller cities don't have certain services such as a hospital or shoe store. However, it does not take into account other factors like waterways or mountains, or the location of roadways. In addition, today's rural communities are increasingly able to take advantage of the specialization once limited to urban settings with advancements in communications technology and transportation improvements. People value the rural environment and can use electronic linkages to reduce the disadvantages of being situated outside of the urban core (Blakely & Leigh, 2010, p. 88).

A related theory is the “Core-Periphery Economy” a type of Location Theory espoused by Krugman (1995). In this theory, there is a dynamic system for the core economy and the periphery economy. As consumer demand increases, there are increasing returns to production of manufactured and related goods. Applying the idea of agglomeration economies, complementary businesses develop around the core, the demand for workers increases, and wages increase, attracting new workers. This circular, and building approach to economic development leads to increased output, a growing market, a growing workforce, and a stronger overall economy. The “backwash effect” however, is that as these new growth poles or city centers take over, there will be a migration of labor from the periphery to the core. As a result, smaller bedroom communities, such as those in South Carolina located near major growth centers such Greenville in the Upstate, may experience displacement of their services and local workforce (Hirschman, 1958). However, when small changes in the periphery occur (Krugman, 1995) with new complementary businesses developing again, this activity can spur growth around the periphery with rapid cumulative effects, continuing the circular growth cycle, and these small towns can once again prosper.

To spur this economic growth, several strategies have been employed for economic development based on some of these traditional economic theories. Typically, they focus on five main strategies: 1) business attraction; 2) business retention; 3) business creation; 4) import substitution; and the 5) offering of incentives. The business attraction strategy attempts to recruit businesses to start-up or relocate in the designated community. Tax incentives and subsidies may be employed to recruit these corporations or businesses, but some have criticized this approach as a zero-sum game (Stimson, et al., 2006, p.22). Business retention strategies have been traditionally designed to retain economic base manufacturing firms in the face of globalization. Business creation, on the other hand, is designed to capitalize on the knowledge economy and create more information intensive products and services, such as mobile apps and high tech

services. The import substitution approach focuses on producing a good locally that was previously produced elsewhere. Finally, the offering of incentives through tax relief, infrastructure improvements, or training has been widely applied and was a major factor in BMW locating a new plant in South Carolina's Upstate region (Stimson, et al., 2006, p. 23). These strategies are not mutually exclusive and can occur simultaneously. This occurs, for example, when a local rural community offers incentives to existing merchants to expand and improve their services, while also offering tax incentives to attract new commercial enterprises to the community.

There are also newer ways of thinking about rural development, and the emergence of "neoendogenous development" theoretical approach is particularly worth considering. Combining "bottom up" (self-help) approaches with "top-down" (exogenous assistance) approaches, this mixed model seeks to bridge the gap between social and economic development (Bosworth & Atterton, 2012, p. 254). Many people are seeking a higher quality of life and have chosen a rural residential location for that purpose. They enjoy less congestion, and technological advancements in communications infrastructure allow them to enjoy a more serene environment while still pursuing their careers. Business leaders in particular, are endowed with a broad range of connections that are "extra local" and they can serve as agents for transforming the local economy to which they move (Bosworth & Atterton, 2012, p. 272). However, there are pitfalls to some of the new models of citizen engagement, such as loss of innovation, slower decision making, and weakened ties among decision makers. Therefore some researchers suggest selective mobilization of action can lead to more effective implementation. The key is to find a balance of representation to bring about a clear consensus of revitalization. Unless endogenous and exogenous approaches are merged effectively, they may become a "victim of their own success" and mitigate the advantages gained (Navarro & Cejudo, 2016, p. 283).

## Creative Placemaking

Placemaking has been defined as “a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces” (Anderson, 2013). Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing. Placemaking also refers to a collaborative process by which communities can “shape our public realm to maximize shared value” (Borazjani & Abedi, 2014, p. 1194). More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place. Additionally, the social support and financial investment in these places is an ongoing evolution. With community-based participation at its center, an effective placemaking process results in the creation of quality public spaces.

Placemaking can be characterized as “both a process and a philosophy” (Project for Public Spaces, n.d.). The concepts behind placemaking originated in the 1960s, when writers like Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte offered groundbreaking ideas about designing cities that catered to people, not just to cars and shopping centers, to “eliminate the loneliness of modern life” (Whyte, 2002, p. 348). Their work focused on the importance of lively neighborhoods and inviting public spaces. Jacobs advocated citizen ownership of streets through the now-famous idea of “eyes on the street” (Jacobs, 1969, p. 35).

Whyte emphasized essential elements for creating social life in public spaces. The term was also used in the 1970s by landscape architects, architects and urban planners to describe the process of creating squares, plazas, parks, streets and waterfronts that will attract people because they are pleasurable or interesting. Landscape often plays an important role in the design process. However, the traditional town planning or “new urbanism” which attempts to restore community and public life through structural modifications using architectural remedies may not be sufficient



alone (Oldenburg, 2001, p. 5). Rather, an important ingredient to achieving vitality is the presence of people. Thus, there is a dual need to creating both an inviting physical setting along with a welcoming environment where people demonstrate hospitality and warmth (Oldenburg, 2001).

More recently, Balassiano & Maldonado (2014) note that placemaking is especially important in communities that are undergoing rapid demographic change. By taking a comprehensive view, as newcomers such as Hispanics and other groups integrate into the community, placemaking initiatives provide an important mechanism that can aid in the transitioning to a new community. Placemaking strategies can be used for building social connections between groups and fostering community connections, forging stronger attachments to their new place. These connections are more likely to occur at places that are widely accessible, have flexibility to accommodate a variety of uses and events, and where social interactions are encouraged (Balassiano & Maldonado, 2014).

Thus, community members are no longer seen as recipients of development programs, but active participants in undertaking community projects that are reflective and responsive to their community needs and aspirations (Hamdi, 2010). This community building through placemaking can be extremely powerful but difficult to achieve. It takes concerted effort to cultivate places and bring out the latent creativity of people. Yet, once tapped, their resourcefulness can help lead to structural change and resilience for lasting development that the community has embraced and brought about through their collective efforts (Hamdi, 2010).

Markusen and Gadwa (2010a) coined the term “creative placemaking” to focus on arts and cultural activities as a way to foster this kind of engagement. They concentrated on how community partners from both the public and private sectors can come together to reshape the physical and social character of a place around the arts. In creative placemaking, the spaces

become animated through rejuvenated structures, enlivened streetscapes, and community celebrations. In doing so, these changes help improve local business viability and public safety, and bring diverse people together “to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired” (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a, p. 3). Relating this theory to “agglomeration effects,” creative placemaking can form large clusters of certain types of creative economic activity within the arts (Stimson, et al., 2006, p. 27). These artistic centers can then realize the benefits of economies of scale, producing goods more economically, and create opportunities for shared resources and diversified activities all in one location. Agglomeration can also help guard against externalities by concentrating people and activities in a central location.

Placemaking also relates to the creative class model developed by Florida (2012). In this construct, Florida’s quality of life model seeks to explain the rise of the new economy, which is focused on the information age and the development of new technologies (e.g., biotechnology) instead of locational advantages. As cities seek to establish and create a competitive advantage using creative placemaking, it complements the creative class model which is based on leveraging local amenities to generate, retain and recruit new talent as a key way to engender economic growth. According to this model, the best way to attract talent is through regional amenities, lifestyle factors, and environmental quality. Job seekers can shop for the city with the best quality of life factors; the key is for a community to be a great place to live as well as work. Moreover, through creative placemaking, this creative class prefers visible spaces and communities where there is a “street-level culture” with an atmosphere of activity and interaction where it gives them a chance to interact with the creators (e.g., the artists and performers) themselves, as well as their creations (Florida, 2012, p. 149).

And yet, creative placemaking goes beyond the creative class policies, proposing a broader set of outcomes (Frenette, 2017). Creative class approaches to development have been

criticized for leading to gentrification (Grodach, Foster, & Murdoch, 2014), when existing public spaces are improved and lower income populations are forced to move away due to rising costs. As economic inequality and segregation continue to grow, processes need to be incorporated that disrupt social injustices, not enhance it. In doing so, Toolis (2017) argues for “critical placemaking” as a means for reclaiming public spaces for public use and making them inviting spaces that are inclusive, participatory and democratic (p. 184). In this manner, placemaking becomes the “interplay of the needs and aspirations of the community” juxtaposed with the design of the built environment, allowing the community to take control of their own welfare and future, crafting social spaces and opportunities for all to enjoy (Prakash Kelkar & Spinelli, 2016, p. 54).

Researchers have identified numerous benefits of creative placemaking, such as job creation, market recapture (spending locally to keep dollars in the community), and increasing property values. Community development can also be enhanced and there is more productive civic engagement (Vasquez, 2012, p. 1). As such, public art, cultural events, and the performing arts themselves are not the outcomes, but rather the strategies. The true outcomes are to improve the overall quality of life of residents, raise the standard of living, and enhance the environment through this cultural expression of place (Vasquez, 2012, p. 6). Examples of the benefits or outcomes of placemaking include the creation of murals that celebrate a town’s local history and/or a planned future development, street fairs and festivals, town-wide scavenger hunts, a Friday night food truck rodeo, and pop-up theatrical or performing arts demonstrations, to name a few (Kageyama, 2014).

In pursuit of these activities, creative placemaking promotes creative expression and leads to community building. It can help preserve order through properly directed self-actualization, opportunities for self-expression, and beneficence toward the greater good. Creative

communities can also add meaning by avoiding “brain drain” the pattern whereby local youth move to more affluent and city-centered areas for employment and access to a greater variety of amenities. This pattern supports the Tiebout theory that people will “vote with their feet” and move to a community that meets a broader set of their wants and needs (Tiebout, 1956).

Placemaking is often coupled with “economic vitality.” This concept incorporates economic development that is committed to developing a vibrant and sustainable economy. Terms such as “creative class” and “cultural economy” have become more common among urban planners, arts administrators, economic developers, and business and municipal leaders. Most recently, the “creative economy” has emerged in recognition of the power of human creativity in economic life (Florida, 2012, p. 15). This theory underscores the entrepreneurial spirit of finding new ways of doing things; synthesizing new technologies, and bringing together a nurturing environment for commercial innovation, creative work, and social interactions. This linking of culture, social networks, lifestyles, and the economy indicates recognition of the connections among the fields of planning, economic development, and arts and culture. Arts, culture, and creativity can improve a community’s competitive edge to create a foundation for defining a sense of place and building an “experience economy” (Vasquez, 2012, p.10). These links can also help attract new and visiting populations and integrate the visions of community and business leaders, as well as contribute to the development of a skilled workforce. There is also a multiplier effect as restaurants are started to serve the cultural tourists, retailers are introduced to serve the needs of the creative professionals, and technology firms are attracted. (Vasquez, 2012, p.10; Florida, 2012, pp. 147-149). These firms often bring professionals who prefer to be in an environment with a wide variety of cultural amenities and services that these types of developments afford (Vasquez, 2012).

In smaller cities this bundling activity is particularly important. Small businesses can cluster together to collaborate and create a larger market for the entire community to benefit. Working together they can compete with larger industries and move towards a focused “collaborative advantage” and “collaborative competition” approach that can enable communities to enjoy sustainable long-term growth and social capital they gain by working together on a common pursuit (Stimson, et al., p. 410). Communities may also benefit from thinking about building social capital endogenously through community engagement and exogenously through visitor attraction. In a recent work by Engbers & Rubin (2018) social capital can be divided into two forms, “bonding social capital” and “bridging social capital” (p. 2). While bonding is characterized by the quality of relationships between people and emphasizes trust, the bridging focuses on quantity and breadth of one’s social and professional network. Based on the more promising empirical evidence, bridging social capital is the more influential, and can have a dramatic impact on economic development. This finding underscores the importance of business networks and professional contacts that are critical to fostering coalitions for the purpose of community and economic development (Engbers & Rubin, 2018).

Once a group of community leaders determines to begin creating a sense of place to spur economic vitality and livability, the group must then look ahead and create a roadmap on how to accomplish this. For rural communities to thrive, they must become the places where people will want to visit, live, work and play (Strategy #5: Making Rural Communities Desirable Places to Live, 2015). Yet, with the wide array of methods for fostering economic vitality and placemaking, the task of making critical policy choices can be daunting, especially for rural communities and small cities that are reliant on limited resources. Building a consensus on which goals and objectives to pursue and then achieving those goals and objectives can be challenging, especially when there is economic distress. Moreover, the “methodological individualism” of

each person's utility preferences can make selecting a unified strategy a daunting task (Andersson & Andersson, 2006, pp. 1 and 165). To the extent that one individual cannot be compared to another, accommodation and open communication will be necessary to articulate broadly defined common and shared goals.

To provide a framework for communities undergoing economic distress, Ladd (1994) identifies three basic policy approaches to community-based development. The first is to focus on a "pure people-oriented strategy" that engages the public and focuses on helping individuals in need. The second is to employ a "place-based, people strategy" that attempts to increase the economic wellbeing of people in a particular community, using a variety of place-specific strategies. Thirdly, a "pure place-based strategy" is leveraged to change the look and feel of a community, using physical improvements to the landscape and streetscapes to improve economic vitality (Shaffer, Deller, & Marcouiller, 2004). In the place-based, people strategy, there is recognition that people have strong ties to place, and that any strategy employed needs to be conducted in the context of their community. Applying this approach would then include strengthening local institutions, working to generate a higher standard of living, and incorporating quality of life features for residents as well as addressing blight, and implementing other physical improvements. Ladd's perspectives are especially relevant to disadvantaged residents in distressed areas undergoing economic decline. The place-based, people strategy emphasizes the residents' wellbeing and the community's vital role in rebuilding and revitalizing communities rather than a focus on conventional business or economic metrics alone (Ladd, 1994, p.195).

The increasing literature about the importance of combining arts and culture to generate economic development, offers insight into the role the cultural arts plays in economic revitalization, but the arts is one of several broad components to consider. The burgeoning awareness of bicycle and pedestrian trail systems and other wellness-oriented activities suggests

that arts and culture are but one of potentially many types of social capital building and placemaking strategies that help facilitate economic vitality. Applying the “General Theory of Walkability,” Speck (2012) asserts that a walkable community must be useful, safe, comfortable and interesting (p. 11). If met, the walkable community is not just an idealistic notion or structural feature; it is a simple and practical means for increasing economic competitiveness, public welfare, social capital, and environmental sustainability.

Economic vitality is also tied to health and wellbeing. The literature has long established the association between health and income in promoting a healthy and productive economy (Lopez-Casasnovas, Rivera & Currias, 2005; Husain, 2010). However, more recently, there is evidence that healthy populations promote wealth and prosperity, not just that wealthy areas have healthier populations (Husain, 2010). Health can be promoted through recognizing a community’s natural assets, such as parks and lakes can contribute to population health by acting as cultural asset, not just a recreational one (Clarke, 2017). In fact, community health has been shown to have a strong influence on increased life span, higher education, and economic growth (Finlay, 2007). This growing appreciation for what health means and how to activity into a community’s placemaking initiatives are key to understanding how a park can be a gathering space, and utilized for activities such as trail walks, dances, and other forms of health promotion. These findings indicate that there is a cyclical effect of wealth on health, and health on economic prosperity (Bloom, Canning, & Sevilla, 2001; DSAE, 2010). Taken together, these findings suggest the need for a fully integrated approach to health, quality of life, and economic wellbeing.

Thus, there is a need for a more robust analysis of the best ways to facilitate economic growth in small rural communities. Such approaches encompass lifestyle factors including arts, culture, history, recreational facilities, and health promotion, coupled with improved infrastructure, among other strategies. With limited resources, local and state policy makers have

a broad array of choices. What course should informed local policy makers take to effectuate the most successful return on their public dollar investment? Moreover, are there certain incentives that will garner the desired participation in redevelopment by investors and local citizens, both in terms of financial investment and job creation, but also in creating community value that leads to a sense of place and community enrichment? A stronger, more integrated and enriched theoretical approach is needed.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Purpose of Study

The study explores the broad range of community and economic development strategies that individuals in rural communities value. Moreover, it seeks to determine the attributes that the residents in four communities in Upstate South Carolina believe contribute to their personal quality of life and to the overall community. Historically, traditional economists have measured economic and social wellbeing solely on quantifiable financial metrics that underscore the business and public infrastructure related components of economic revitalization. These include measures such as private investment, job creation, and public resource and service improvements with an overall focus on wealth creation (Blakely & Leigh, 2010, p. 73). Until recently, few studies have characterized economic development in terms of community attributes desired by residents. This newer, more inclusive perspective is considered by some researchers to have more meaning and lasting value than the more heavily utilized and entrenched traditional measures, suggesting that further investigation is needed (Stiglitz, 2002; Knight Foundation, 2010; Hamdi, 2010; Schupbach, 2015; Prakash Kelkar & Spinelli, 2016; Redaelli, 2016; Salzman & Yerace, 2017; Winther, 2017). Thus, this exploratory research lays the foundation for gaining a better understanding of the types of development strategies the public considers important and how best to define and advance those strategies in rural communities. Moreover, the study explores the role of local leadership in facilitating a more open and inviting public inclusion process for economic development, thereby helping to make these types of revitalization a reality within their own local areas.

## Research Design

The "Community Voices" study uses a mixed-methods case study approach to research economic and community vitality in four small rural towns and seeks to determine the community and economic development strategies that the public values. Methods include archival data analysis of socio-economic information, community focus groups, and an online survey. National key informant interviews focusing on state policy and leadership roles in economic development, offer a broad perspective on the issues investigated in this project.

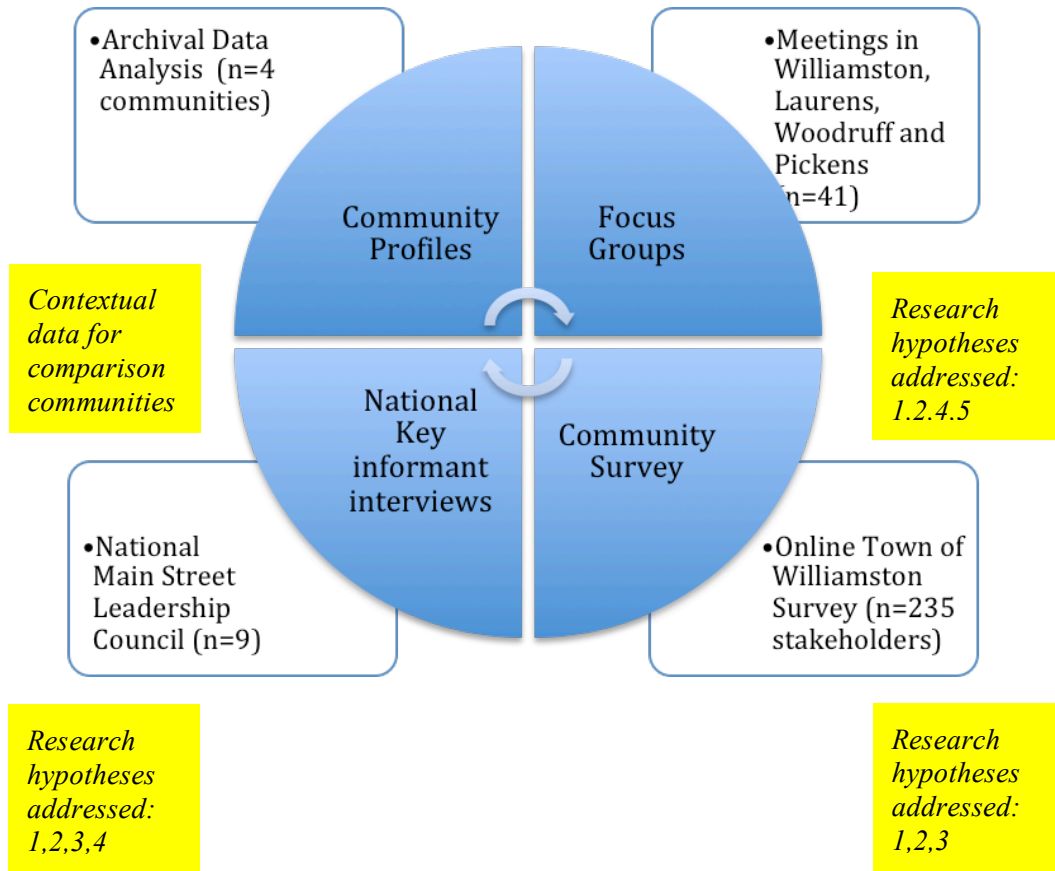
Mixed methods are becoming the norm in contemporary social science research practice (Nguyen, 2011). Properly conducted, surveys are able to yield results that are representative of the population under study and thus assure high reliability of results. However, surveys lack the depth of understanding and interactive problem solving that can be achieved through focus group discussions and structured interviews. These methods allow participants to comment and offer insights on the public policy issues under discussion (Rossi, et al., 2004), but they lack the broad participation of the survey method (Rea & Parker, 2005). Used in combination, the “triangulation” of these research techniques is able to capitalize on the strengths of each method and overcome their respective drawbacks (Jick, 1979, pp. 604 and 608). In the “concurrent triangulation” approach used in this study, both the qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently and then compared to determine if there is convergence or differences in the results (Creswell, 2009, p. 213). Together, these methods achieve scientific rigor (reliability and validity), are able to discern both a quantitative and qualitative understanding of the issues, add community voices and perspectives, and provide the opportunity for inclusion of national leaders engaged in community revitalization. No one method can achieve all of these objectives alone; thus, this mixed-methods approach, while more time intensive, was used to realize the benefits and strengths of this more robust research design.

The overall research approach is summarized below in Figure 3.1. Moving clockwise around the circle, the research began with a review of archival data for each of the research communities to provide a contextual understanding of each community, followed by focus group meetings in the targeted case study communities. The study also included an online community survey to provide a richer, in-depth understanding of the issues and community preferences in one of the study communities, and is finally coupled with a series of personal interviews with members of the national Main Street Leadership Council to provide a national perspective. Each research activity is tied to specific research hypotheses and, in total, this process collectively engaged 289 people.

Clemson University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the Community Voices study design as Exempt under category B2 based on federal regulations 45CFR46 on August 29, 2016. Due to changes in the national Main Street Leadership Council there was a delay in conducting the interviews. An extension request was granted on February 9, 2017 to extend the protocol through 2017 (please see Appendix C).

All the Community Voices research was conducted between the dates of November 2016 and December 2017. Although archival data was collected through secondary sources, all other research methods involved primary data collection. Table 3.1. outlines the overall project timetable by research method employed.

**Figure 3.1.** Community Voices Research Framework



**Table 3.1.** Community Voices Project Timeline

	2016		2017											
Activity	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Archival Data Analysis														
Focus Groups: Laurens (L); Pickens (P); Williamston (Wi); Woodruff (Wo)	Wi			L										Wo, P
Community Survey														
Key Informant Interviews														

## Archival Data

A desktop review of demographic and socio-economic factors was completed in spring 2017 to provide a baseline assessment of the four case study communities. The four cities/towns of Laurens, Pickens, Williamston and Woodruff are all located in the Upstate of South Carolina. These are small rural cities and towns that have populations ranging from just over 3,000 to nearly 9,000 people. They are situated in four different counties of the Upstate including Laurens, Pickens, Anderson, and Spartanburg Counties to provide insights into different communities and sectors of the region. Socio-economic data were collected from sources that have been tracking growth patterns and market conditions in communities throughout the region. These sources include the Upstate South Carolina Alliance, the United States Census Bureau, and forecasts from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) based on the 2014 American Community Survey. The ESRI data also provided essential insights into the market retail surplus and leakage data to determine which areas are attracting customers and which are losing market share to nearby marketplaces.

## Focus Groups

The focus group research was conducted in four rural communities in the Upstate of South Carolina that are undergoing economic development and revitalization. Three of the study communities (Laurens, Pickens and Williamston) are part of the national Main Street program and are formal members of the statewide Main Street network. The fourth, the Woodruff site, represents an economic development office in a local city government that was a Main Street member until 2016. These four programs exemplify many of the traditional Main Street program components that encourage local downtown revitalization such as promotional and design activities, coupled with economic revitalization and key organizational development strategies.

To be eligible for the study, communities were required to meet the following study criteria: (1) be a Main Street program or a mid-level (at least three projects undertaken) economic development community; (2) have a population size of 10,000 residents or less; (3) availability of an email/address data base, such as a water/sewer mailing and phone number contact log; and (4) inclusion of geographic political wards. The four communities ultimately selected were similar in size, composition, and general location/topography to reduce statistical interactions due to demographic, locational bias, natural features (e.g., coastal region), or other geographic factors that might influence the results. Main Street program managers from each of the selected cities coordinated the focus group recruitment process between November 2016 and December 2017. Local residents and business owners were invited from each Main Street study community to participate in the CV Focus Group discussions. Elected officials and local merchants were contacted to host and assist with recruitment of residents to participate in the community discussions.

Several of the managers recruited participants from their existing committee on economic restructuring or their local merchant association. The primary methods of contact for recruitment include email invitations, personal telephone calls, flyers, and face-to-face contacts. Focus group participants included residents, business owners, property owners, elected officials, and employees in the municipalities of Laurens, Pickens, Williamston, and Woodruff, South Carolina. These focus group questions were based on several lines of inquiry concerning economic development, quality of life, future plans, and the role of leadership. An ease/impact mapping protocol informed the process (National Charrette Institute, 2016), and a post-forum questionnaire was created (National Issues Forum, n.d.). The focus group discussion questions are included in Appendix D.

#### Community Survey

A community-based online survey was conducted to assess the case study population's interest in economic and community vitality. The survey method was selected for multiple reasons. A survey is able to reach the largest number of people in the population, assure a representative sample of the study population, and assess their views across different types of questions. A stratified random sample was specifically desired to assure the highest level of confidence.

The town of Williamston, one of the targeted rural communities included in the study, was selected for the survey implementation. Williamston was selected for this in-depth analysis due to the availability of geographic ward level data and access to community stakeholder email addresses, which were cross-referenced by ward addresses. The implementation of the survey in a single community also allows for testing of the instrument.

In spring 2017, a listing of local residents was secured from the town of Williamston based on its waste collection schedule and ward designations. This listing included names, addresses, and phone numbers for town residents stratified by each of the four wards created for the provision of public services and closely aligned with the political wards of the town for election of town council officials. A fifth listing was provided for residents with no ward designation as recorded by town staff. Utilizing these lists of residents, businesses and property owners, their names and addresses were cross-referenced with other email listings provided by the town, Envision Williamston, the Palmetto Business Association, and the local police department. From these listings a sample of 584 unduplicated residents and community stakeholders was created. Once tested for validity, the resultant list consisted of 483 usable emails (see Table 3.2.).

**Table 3.2.** Survey Participant Recruitment

Group	Representation	Number	Usable
1	Ward 1	54	44
2	Ward 2	72	66
3	Ward 3	54	46
4	Ward 4	65	60
5	At Large (In Town with no Ward designation)	79	67
6	Stakeholders (Town/EW, PBA, Public Safety)	260	200
Totals		584	483

Personal email invitations to participate in the online Community Voices Survey were sent out in July 21, 2017. SurveyMonkey© software was utilized for its standardized format options and ease of survey access through external links and email listings. The results are easily downloadable for analysis. The survey was open through October 2017 to allow sufficient time for local Council members to encourage residents to participate. Two reminder prompts were also sent via email on August 8<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, and the town’s electronic message board included an announcement for the community survey. Paper copies of the survey were also made available on site at Town Hall, in case some individuals were unable to participate online due to age, lack of access to a computer or other delimiting condition. The types of participants recruited to complete the study include: adult community residents, business owners, property owners, public officials, community leaders, and employees working in the town but who lived in nearby communities.

The Community Voices survey (Appendix E) was designed to elicit feedback on the town and its services overall, and then delve into specific economic and community vitality questions. It explored on a more in-depth level the relationship between local government accountability and transparency in the decision making process. The survey also explored the community’s perceptions concerning government’s role in economic development and the specific programs and initiatives the community desires for its future. Standardized questions



were obtained from eight similar (8) surveys, including the National Research Center's City of Fort Collins, Colorado 2003 Citizen Survey (Q4 and Q13); 2008 ETC Institute Survey (Q3); 2016 Fountain Inn Master Plan Survey (Q1, Q14, and Q15); 2014/15 Simpsonville Small Business Survey (Q2); Gallup International's 2010 Knight Foundation – Communities Project Survey (Q21, Q23); 2016 Main Street Trends Survey (Q12); 2009 UBCM Economic Development Survey of Local Governments (Q7); and the 2015 EPA Smart Growth Self-Assessment of Rural Communities (Q5 and Q6). These were combined with original questions developed and tailored to the Community Voices Study and its specific research questions. In total, there were 28 questions in the survey, with an estimated completion time of 15-20 minutes.

#### Key Informant Interviews

In the spring of 2017, key informant interviews were conducted with the national Main Street Leadership Council (hereafter referred to as Leadership Council), formerly known as the National Main Street Coordinators' Executive Committee. The Leadership Council is composed of 10 members who represent a variety of Main Street coordinating programs. The Council membership strives to achieve geographical balance across the country, diversity of program type (e.g., non-profit and government based), a blend of new and experienced coordinators, and a mixture of state, city and regional coordinating programs. The Leadership Council also includes the immediate past chair as an Emeritus member, and a Designer/Architect position. Their purpose is to provide insights into issues and opportunities at the front lines to the National Main Street Center, and help market the national network of coordinating programs (National Main Street Center, 2015).

The interviews were conducted to learn more about their perspectives on the role of leadership as it pertains to public and private sector participation in achieving sustainable economic development and community vitality. The interviews also explored methods for

improving the overall quality of life within a community. The interviewer applied the Quality of Life/Happiness Ladder developed by The Gallup Poll, Inc. as cited in Knight Foundation – Communities Project 2010. This national perspective on leadership issues serves to complement the local case study findings and community survey results by providing a broader perspective of how Main Street program address similar issues across the country.

Personal invitations to participate in the interviews were extended to members of the Leadership Council. These invitation were sent via email. Some members responded immediately, but on occasion two to three follow-up contacts were required to secure an interview. Follow-up personal phone calls were conducted during the early spring 2017. All interviews were conducted during February through April 2017.

The interview questions are included in Appendix F.

#### Delimitations of the Study

Researchers are often challenged when conducting evaluations of local community processes. Programs that take on major social (and economic) issues can, in some situations, raise concerns about the research and its applications (Rossi, 2004, p. 17). The Community Voices researcher faced this situation during the planning and implementation phase of the focus groups, and was required to improvise by conducting a series of walk around or modified intercept interviews (Intercept Interviews, n.d.) with local merchants in one of the study communities based on a list provided by the city. This modified approach allowed the interviewer to conduct surveys with the employers onsite at their place of business while they are interacting with customers (Hardwick Research, n.d.). Despite this change in design format, the innovation yielded data that would otherwise not have been available. It is a different method (intercept interviews) and therefore makes comparisons much more difficult. Nonetheless, applying this method demonstrated the utility of the intercept interview as a valuable tool for reaching busy

business leaders who may otherwise be unable to participate, while also providing a more private conversation for them to share their frank views and personal concerns about the city and its economic future.

It should also be noted that some focus group discussants were not residents. Most of the participants were business leaders or community leaders who have identified with the community but several reside just outside the city limits. The result is that their voices do not directly represent the residents of the community but do provide the business leader perspective.

The survey was also not conducted in all four case study communities. This limitation occurred due to the lack of an adequate data set of email addresses for all local households in three of the communities, and the fact that some Main Street programs are not directly affiliated with the city government that maintains these types of records. Future research in other cities and rural communities will need to address access to a viable email database for each study area.

In addition, all methods are subject to sample selection bias. Focus group participants, for example, self-selected to participate in the discussions. Further inquiries may be necessary to assure that other merchants are able to express their views by administering a survey specifically targeted to the business community. The community survey was also optional and while over 400 people were invited to participate, the results are based on a sample of 235. To overcome the potential bias of only those most favorable to the town's initiatives responding or over-representation by geographic ward, the researcher tracked the responses by different ward invitational lists to determine the level of response by respondent group.

In summary, the fourfold research design includes archival and original exploratory data collection utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study occurred over a 13-month period from November 2016 through December 2017, starting with initial recruitment to completion of all research methods. Descriptive archival demographic and socio-economic data

were collected in the winter/spring of 2017 for all four case study communities to provide baseline information and a general background for the focus group findings. The combination of survey, focus groups, and interviews are designed to help answer identified research questions focused on rural and economic development and to further consider the local rural experiences of communities within the broader context of the national perspective as viewed by the national Main Street program. These observations can also assist in laying the groundwork for future directions, and offer guidance to local communities undergoing similar revitalization efforts across the country.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Case Study Archival Data and Focus Group Discussions

##### Community Characteristics

The four case study communities of Laurens, Pickens, Williamston and Woodruff are situated in four different counties of the Upstate including Laurens, Pickens, Anderson, and Spartanburg. Spartanburg County has the largest population with 300,563 people, and it is the fastest growing county in the cluster with a projected rate of change of 5% by the year 2021 (see Table 4.1.A). Adjacent to Spartanburg County is Greenville County; while not included in this study, it is important to note that it is projected to grow by 8% during this time period, and is considered one of the nation's fastest growing areas. Pickens and Anderson counties are projected to grow by 3%, and Laurens County is expected to grow by only 1% through 2021 (ESRI, 2016).

While the overall region of the Upstate is expected to experience sustained growth over the five-year projection period, in contrast, the four case study cities are projected to have only modest growth (Woodruff by 2%), flat growth (Pickens and Williamston), or a decline (Laurens) in population by 2020 (2%) (ESRI, 2016). These latent growth patterns, coupled with struggling downtowns, market leakage, stagnant incomes, and limited education levels, all point to the need for economic and community revitalization.

In terms of households, most of the case study communities have between 1,222 (Pickens) and 3,671 (Laurens) (see Table 4.1.B). The median age ranges from 38.7 to 43.4 years, with Pickens having the youngest population, and Woodruff the oldest. Laurens has the highest concentrations of elders (65 years of age or older), representing about one-fifth the population.

Williamston has the smallest percentage of elders at 16.8%, although Woodruff is very similar at 17.1%.

In terms of diversity, the small cities of Laurens and Woodruff have larger African American or Black populations at 42.2% and 24.5% respectively (see Table 4.1.C). These two communities have larger Hispanic representation at 6.3% and 8.2% respectively, thus more closely mirroring the growing Hispanic population in nearby Greenville County (9%). In contrast, Pickens and Williamston are more homogeneous with 82.3% to 84.2% of their population comprised of Whites or Caucasians, 13.3% and 11.3% of the population is Black, and only 3.4% to 3.9% of their populations of Hispanic origin respectively (see Table 4.1.C).

**Table 4.1.** Case Study Profile Data

*Table 4.1.A Home County Data*

City/Town	County	County Pop. 2016	County Proj 2021	County % Chng.	County 65+	County Black
Laurens	Laurens	67,486	68,420	0.01	17.4%	25.6%
Pickens	Pickens	122,909	126,514	0.03	15.5%	6.9%
Williamston	Anderson	194,751	201,456	0.03	17.4%	16.3%
Woodruff	Spartanburg	300,563	314,887	0.05	15.7%	20.6%

*Table 4.1.B Case Study City – Population Projections*

City/Town	Town Pop.	Proj. 2020	% Chng.
Laurens	8,864	8,710	(0.02)
Pickens	3,003	2,995	(0.00)
Williamston	3,852	3,852	(0.00)
Woodruff	4,148	4,235	0.02

*Table 4.1.C Case Study City – Demographic and Educational Data*

City/Town	Town Pop.	House-holds	Median Age	Pop. 65+	White	Black	Hisp. Origin	< HS Ed.
Laurens	8,864	3,671	42.1	20.3%	52.5%	42.2%	6.3%	20.0%
Pickens	3,003	1,222	38.7	18.6%	82.3%	13.3%	3.4%	25.0%

Williamston	3,852	1,576	40.4	16.8%	84.2%	11.3%	3.9%	19.0%
Woodruff	4,148	1,574	43.4	17.1%	66.1%	24.5%	8.2%	40.0%

Sources:

2016.2 Census of Employment and Wages, Bureau of Labor Statistics, SC Dept. of Employment Workforce and EMSI, Inc. as cited by Upstate SC Alliance, (County) August 04, 2016.

ESRI forecasts for 2015 and 2020 (based on 2009-2014 American Community Survey; US Bureau of the Census, 2010 Census of Population and Housing) as cited by Economic Futures Group, Alliance Pickens, Upstate SC Alliance, and Anderson County Today: (Municipal data) February 2, 2016.

Mean age: ASC Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2011-2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

As indicated in Table 4.2., incomes vary across these small cities, as do other indicators of economic prosperity. Williamston has the highest median household income (\$37,489), whereas Woodruff has the lowest (\$28,987). In comparison, South Carolina's median household income was \$47,835 (Census, ACS data, 2015). Retail market surplus/leakage data indicates, however, that Laurens has a significant inflow of resources, when compared to the other case study cities. This occurrence may be due to the lack of other retail options in Laurens County, other than the comparably sized Clinton. The city of Clinton is of comparable size to Laurens with 8,600 residents, is situated close to Interstate 385 and Interstate 26, and is home to Presbyterian College. The city of Pickens also has a surplus of purchasing activity for residents within a five-mile driving radius, but the surplus converts to leakage once the drive time extends

**Table 4.2.** Socio-Economic and Market Area Data - 2015 and 2017

City/ Town	Median Household Income (2015)	Market Leakage/Surplus 5 min. drive (2017)	Market Leakage/Surplus 10 min. drive (2017)	Market Leakage/Surplus 15 min. drive (2017)	Development Plan (<5yrs)
Laurens	\$31,876.00	\$94,817,790	\$141,447,157	\$144,477,503	Yes - 2017
Pickens	\$34,870.00	\$51,705,255	\$25,735,832	\$137,201,991	Yes - 2013
Williamston	\$37,489.00	\$23,150,559	\$82,641,662	\$170,881,419	Yes -2016
Woodruff	\$28,987.00	\$27,917,675	\$4,986,688	\$65,946,792	None

Sources:

ESRI forecasts for 2015 and 2020 (based on 2009-2014 American Community Survey; US Bureau of the Census, 2010 Census of Population and Housing) as cited by Economic Futures Group, Alliance Pickens, Upstate SC Alliance, and Anderson County Today: (Municipal data) February 2, 2016. **Red** denotes retail surplus; **Green** denotes leakage.

to 10-15 minutes. Williamston, on the other hand, is losing significant market retail potential, with high levels of retail leakage for all customers in the immediate and adjacent areas. Williamston's outflow may be due, at least in part, to the lack of retail options in the town, and its close proximity to shopping and dining options in nearby Anderson and Greenville. Another consideration is which of these cities has an Economic Development Plan that was crafted within the last five years. Three of the four cities have plans in place, whereas Woodruff, as of yet, does not have a community master plan for economic development to guide its growth and redevelopment activities (see Table 4.2.). A plan is often considered an essential tool for revitalization as it provides an end goal and roadmap for the future around which the community can galvanize its support. This overall strategic orientation often includes a mission, vision, goals and tactics for communicating and aligning the activities of community partners, prioritizing work, and maximizing organizational resources (Smith & Bloom, 2017, p. 13).

#### Focus Group Findings

##### *Overall Participation*

A series of focus group discussions were held over the course of approximately one year in the Upstate of South Carolina, between November 14, 2016 and December 14, 2017. There were several scheduling conflicts, but all community discussions were held either as a focus group discussion or as a series of intercept interviews.

Between 4 to 19 people participated at each meeting, with an average of 11 participants, excluding the one-to-one interviews held in Woodruff (n=7). The local Main Street programs hosted the focus groups held in Laurens (n=11) and Pickens (n=4), and the local Palmetto Business Association hosted the Williamston group, which also had the largest turnout (n=19). Woodruff participants were unable to meet as a group due to the holidays, and agreed to participate in a series of "walk around" intercept interviews over the course of a day and a half.



Participants in the discussions were primarily composed of local business leaders, often from the downtown historic dining and shopping areas. The Williamston focus group also had notable representation from local government, including two mayors (one from the immediate city and an adjacent town), the faith community, recreation, and a local media outlet. The Laurens local merchant group was largely represented by business leaders and other concerned citizens. Similarly, the meetings in Woodruff and Pickens were held with business and economic development leaders as well as retired business professionals.

Based on a post-event questionnaire, participants were largely White Caucasian, a mix of males and females, ranging in ages from 23 years to over 65, with many residing in the city/town or in a nearby location just outside the city or in a neighboring city. Regardless of their place of residence, most if not all, worked or owned a business or property in the city under discussion, or were actively involved on a local committee to foster local revitalization efforts.

#### *Best and Worst Features of the Area*

As an icebreaker, the group discussion began with the participants identifying the features they liked best about their town/area, and what they liked least. Their responses were written on a flip chart or on a sheet of paper. A synopsis of the leading “Best Features” is provided in the individual focus group/discussion summaries in Appendix G.

It is notable that there is a true ecology of place (Relph, 2017). Each city or town has a unique set of attributes that the participants value and serve to represent the mind-set of the community. In other words, the unique interactions between place, politics and social interactions are what give a place character and meaning. In Williamston, participants made a case for the town’s welcoming atmosphere for small businesses and the huge potential of the town given its location and proximity to Greenville. The participants also underscored the town’s historic Mineral Spring Park and its impressive Town Hall. Laurens, on the other hand, has an impressive,

historic Downtown Square with a Courthouse that provides a unique character and serves as an ideal venue for downtown events. Several discussants identified Laurens' "cool" vibe that adds charm and warmth that cannot be experienced in a larger city. They noted the importance of young adults who are returning to the area and their ability to bring "creative, outside the box" thinking.

Location was also a factor for the study cities. For example, Woodruff's strategic location near Greenville provides a locational advantage in being close to a larger city and its amenities, while still being able to maintain its small community atmosphere. In Pickens, the friendly people, growth potential of the area, and rural lifestyle stood out. The city's strategic location on the way to the mountains and its new Doodle Trail for bicyclists and other non-motorized vehicles were recognized as key assets that the participants would like to see advanced.

Another notable theme is the positive efforts of the cities to embrace change. Williamston discussants praised their local leaders for helping citizens to set a course for the future. Without it, they believed there would be no visible change possible. In Woodruff, several discussants noted that the leadership was receptive and actively engaged in redevelopment efforts. It was less well articulated in Pickens and Laurens, although both groups sought active leadership involvement.

The shared features across towns often encompassed as strong sense of opportunity and potential for the city or town. Having a positive, forward thinking attitude, a friendly and welcoming population were also common positive features. With a strong educational system, great location, and low cost of living, many expressed that their small town was ready for revitalization and change.

Several of the small cities face some common obstacles to revitalization. Discussants across the board expressed concerns about vacant and dilapidated buildings. These vacancies send a message that the owners have left their business property and "homes to rot." Even when a

well-kept space is available, prospective homebuyers or new business owners are skeptical of adjacent properties and how the dilapidated structures might impact their own property values or business. Added to this concern is the problem of visual clutter (e.g., power lines, abandoned buildings and vehicles). Most, if not all, of the case study downtowns are suffering from years of neglect and abandonment of highly visible structures, leading to suburban blight. Compounding the issue are the limited social activities for singles and other young Millennials. Several local shopkeeper discussants agreed that they need more community support for shopping locally in town. Currently, many residents travel to Fountain Inn, Greenwood, or Greenville for evening/weekend activities and consumer goods.

Availability of good paying jobs, economic opportunity, and appropriate zoning are additional universal challenges. In Woodruff, the lack of well-paying job opportunities and skills training has limited their ability to attract industry. With that said, they are making progress in this area as Greenville and Simpsonville become saturated. Planned growth is needed in all areas, but many report lax building codes or enforcement. In addition, some long-term residents have been vocal regarding their resistance to change, and property owners oftentimes are seeking above market prices for buildings that have undergone little reinvestment or upkeep. As small cities, their public resources are often limited, and infrastructure improvements are often delayed investments. Several discussants perceive this inaction has led to some missed opportunities to revitalize. Lacking necessary services and amenities, many residents turn elsewhere for shopping and dining, and many of the younger residents are leaving the area upon graduation. Continued declines and market leakage for these small cities are evident, especially when other more robust commercial marketplaces are available nearby. An added problem is often the lack of volunteerism or an aging resource network. The perceived lack of civic engagement and

transparency of leadership has led to a climate of ambiguity and an uncertain future for several of these communities.

### *Assessing Progress Toward Economic and Community Vitality*

Following this assessment of strengths and challenges, researchers invited discussants to view a poster board showing a “longitudinal mapping” (or matrix of stages) of a community undergoing growth and development. Researchers asked participants, “Where are we [on this continuum] as a Town/Area that is seeking redevelopment and revitalization? Are we in Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, or Stage 4?” Participants were provided examples of development activities at each progressive stage, ending with Stage 4 when business and community leaders want to invest, live, work and play in the city. Discussants were invited to place blue dots next to where they feel their town is “at this time,” and green dots where they felt they would most “like to be” over the next five years (see Table 4.3.).

**Table 4.3.** Longitudinal Mapping of Progress Toward Economic and Community Vitality

Stage 1 Come and visit	Stage 2 Come and stay awhile	Stage 3 Stay overnight	Stage 4 Become a resident
• Festivals	• Street sales to partner with major Park events	• Boutique hotels	• Mixed-use housing
• Signature events		• Bed & breakfasts	• Single family homes
• Park activities	• Food truck rodeos	• 2-day events	• Walkable community
• Special sales events	• Specialty stores	• Weekend activities	• Cultural amenities
• Season of events	• Multiple dining venues	• Specialty tours	• Expanded / Advanced recreational amenities
• Recreational amenities	• Historic sites	• Arts & cultural offerings	
• Town cleanup	• Outdoor activities	• Visitor attractions	
• Beautification	• Trail system	• Weekend / evening hours	• Name brand hotels

The results are compelling. Most of the discussants placed their blue dots representing “where they are now” in *Stage 1: Come and Visit* (see Appendix H). The most frequently marked

items under this stage are festivals, signature events, and park activities. In Williamston and Laurens, the discussants also marked the town's "season of events" for which both towns are known during the spring and summer. Several of the cities' discussants also marked town cleanups, recreational amenities, and beautification. In Woodruff, the city park was recently revitalized with a new ball field and a stage. Many commented that they are primed and ready for more festivals and local events or gatherings to promote social engagement, but they need to plan events and programs for these improved areas so that they do not remain underutilized.

When describing "where they are now" some discussants marked items under the *Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile* column, especially for features such as historical sites, specialty stores, the availability of food trucks, and a trail system, the latter of which is being developed in three of the cities. In Pickens, there was a strong emphasis on outdoor activities, albeit the discussants acknowledge that they have yet to fully capitalize on their outdoor amenities and the city's close proximity to the mountains. While largely skipped over by participants, *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*, underscores the lack of overnight accommodations in these small cities. However, the Pickens group did identify some specialty tours and arts and cultural offerings as provided by the local Arts Center. In large part, however, the discussants did not perceive their cities as having reached this stage, due the lack of overnight accommodations, few cultural events and visitor attractions, and limited weekend or evening hours. Several discussants from Woodruff and Laurens marked features in *Stage 4: Become a Resident*. They identified features present such as [advanced] recreational amenities, a walkable community, and the availability of single-family homes.

In assessing where they "want to be" over the next five years, individual community goals varied by location, and not all participants desired dramatic growth. In Williamston, there was nearly unanimous consensus that they want to progress to *Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile*, as this would be the next logical step in their redevelopment efforts. The leading features selected by

the Williamston focus group participants include incorporating multiple dining venues, closely followed by outdoor activities, and then food truck rodeos, specialty stores, and a trail system.

In Laurens, votes for where they “would like to be” revealed another story. Most of their dots were placed in *Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile* and *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*. Under Stage 2, they wanted to pursue multiple dining venues, and many felt they needed to have a greater variety of businesses in town. Laurens discussants also expressed the desire for later hours to attract local shoppers who often commute during the day and would only be available to shop in the evening or on the weekends. The challenge for merchants, however, is to be able to take care of their own families during these times and have sufficient income to support part-time and weekend help. Some suggested a business incentive to local merchants to assist with this transition. In Pickens, they added the need to institute better traffic flow and address their parking needs. Relative to Stage 3, several discussants across all groups indicated a desire for a bed and breakfast or boutique hotel. Other responses/preferences included adding visitor attractions, more art and cultural offerings, and weekend/evening hours.

During the discussion, Williamston and Pickens participants noted that they were trying to be realistic about where they are at this time, predominantly in Stage 1 with a few overlays into Stage 2. They indicated a wish to logically move into a full Stage 2 scenario with more dining venues, specialty stores, and perhaps overnight accommodations through a B&B or boutique hotel, or even an Airbnb strategy (Stage 3). They are not opposed to becoming a Stage 4 location attracting new residents and investors; they simply felt, in general, that they realistically were not yet ready for that level of engagement and development.

Woodruff appeared to be the exception to this view. Discussants observed that the city has been exploring the development of new single-family homes and plans to make a connector between the park and downtown for walkability (Stage 4). Some discussants considered these

plans to be premature, given their current stage of development; they felt this might be challenging to the downtown area if the city skips over filling-in the central business district with additional features from Stages 2 and 3. Without the “things to do” component, there could be a hollowing-out of the city center, creating less livable spaces. Industrial development may lead to new housing and residents, but not add the downtown redevelopment needed for added vibrancy. As one participant put it, they need to “build out, not grow out” the city.

For those respondents who indicated they were ready for some Stage 4 elements, the walkable community concept was the most frequently selected. Many also wished to see more recreational amenities in the community. They felt that these features would promote health and wellness, while also attracting more visitors to the area. Discussants from Pickens and Woodruff underscored the need to add some other activities such as bringing in more “industry and growth” and the need for “planning and zoning,” but not at the expense of quality of life due to excessive population growth or density.

Another major hurdle is the presence of dilapidated buildings. Participants viewed this as a major problem, with many of the buildings filled with asbestos and other contaminants that can drive up the cost of rehabilitation. They also reflected upon Greenville, and adjured, “Just look at Greenville. They did several things to jumpstart it again. When they tried something, they then looked back to see what worked.” As one discussant observed, “There is no silver bullet. We need a collection of these activities,” indicating that the community leaders need to address a broad range of traditional economic development strategies, coupled with newer strategies, and find which ones fit their particular community.

The second part of assessing their progress toward economic and community vitality was to examine how communities can move toward their goals, and which of these goals are most achievable in the next one to three years. The first step was to identify easily achievable goals for

the short-term, and then secondly, which activities were identified as most important, but for the longer term.

Discussants were also invited to write down or identify their top three ideas for each category (to achieve in the short term and long term). When asked for specific next steps, the participants from Laurens, Pickens, Williamston, and Woodruff were most likely to suggest activities that can attract people and businesses to town. These included activities such as improving the overall downtown appearance, adding in more retail through the offering of incentives, and building a stronger base of ongoing events such as a Greek Festival. Many suggested that they as community leaders need to attract investors to help improve the downtown with an upscale restaurant, but few offered specific details on how to attract this business investment. Some participants suggested building a nightlife atmosphere, adding in more cultural events, and resolving parking issues. Other recommendations include marketing their events more widely, getting more people involved, and a Woodruff participant suggested offering a town-wide community service day based on the successful “Indy Do Day” which connects businesses to community needs in Indianapolis. But for some discussants, such as in Pickens, the most frequently mentioned item was the need to “pull a plan together” and generate shared buy-in among the leadership in order to mobilize around some common strategies for the future.

Over the longer term, discussants would like to see more downtown living and an overall vibrant downtown, historical city center with attractive facades, boutique hotels, art and cultural events, and access to a robust array of sporting and recreational opportunities throughout the week. Several noted that financial incentives are needed to spur this growth, and vacant properties will need to be addressed. Further, traffic should be slowed to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and “slow growth” should be encouraged. The overall objective should be that growth occurs in a thoughtful and mindful way that does not alter the charm of the area, but



rather encourages the type of development that will add value and a unique character to the area.

#### *Leadership, Accountability and Transparency*

Discussants were invited to describe what they identify as the roles of local leaders and their impact on achieving the desired aims for the future. Williamston participants identified specific roles for leaders as: communicator, coordinator, guider, facilitator, and attractor of new, stable businesses to town, as well as offering new business incentives. Woodruff participants also saw their city officials as active leaders in the community with a progressive interest in redevelopment opportunities, if not specifically targeting the downtown area. Laurens discussants expressed a less favorable view, however. They saw that there had been no progressive change fostered by the city or county council, in the recent past, and that their Comprehensive Master Plan for the city had not yet been completed. Participants from Pickens also articulated a leadership gap among the groups engaged in redevelopment. Complementary working relationships need to be developed. If each stakeholder group is looking to the other for leadership, the business community will not be able to effectively mobilize. Several observed that a shared economic development plan is needed. Towards this end, the Main Street Laurens program was in the process of developing a Community Master Plan, but it will not be able to address all of the city's needs such as better zoning, code enforcement, and infrastructure support.

Several participants felt that officials need to employ both incentives and penalties to foster redevelopment. Again, no one intervention can do it all. Discussants recommended that several incentives be leveraged to attract investors for development, and penalties be applied for building owners when property is left dormant for an extended period.

#### *Quality of Life*

Discussants were next invited to imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for the respondent

and his/her community, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for the respondent and his/her community (see Table 4.4.). These happiness ratings were ranked separately for the city and then for the individual. The current wellbeing of the city was not necessarily the same as for the individual as they each could be influenced by separate factors.

**Table 4.4.** Happiness Rating Scales by City

Happiness Scale Rating	Williamston	Laurens	Woodruff	Pickens	Overall Scores
Score today	5.7	5	8.7	6.5	6.5
Future score five years hence	8.8	7.9	9.8	8.5	8.8

Most discussants scored their city as being in the upper middle range of the Quality of Life ladder. Scores were increased by about 2 points over the next five years due to anticipated improvements. In Williamston, discussants noted the forward momentum that is being generated by their current local leaders. To be successful they feel they will need to continue in this direction, keep the vision alive, and recruit more volunteers and investors in their communities to help them realize these goals as outlined in their Community Master Plan. They will also need the dedicated work of community members and investors to help finance the strategic directions for their community. While there is no one activity that will singularly help contribute to improvements in their quality of life, Williamston participants voiced their assurance that having a collective array of people working together toward a common set of goals, gave them hope and inspiration for the future.

In Laurens, discussants felt their top priority was to complete their community master plan, recruit more active volunteers and leaders, and solicit more investors in their community to help them realize their dreams. They wish to build on their strengths in order to succeed. They also recognize the need for the dedicated work of community members, investors, and business

owners to help finance and support these beautification, community engagement, and development activities.

Woodruff discussants tended to express a more independent position. They expressed that their quality of life was not dependent on the town's redevelopment. This view may be due to fact that most of the participants own a business in town, but do not actually live in the city limits. They did express that the city is moving in the right direction, and within the next several years some progress can be made that will have a great impact on the town, and a marginally positive impact on them personally.

Finally, in Pickens there was a strong interest in establishing a different atmosphere in the community; that is, respondents indicated that the future of the city is highly dependent on what the leadership does, and they can set the pace and tone of the revitalization process. With a fresh perspective, new ideas, and an agreed upon Master Plan, the community could experience a higher degree of change. Given the number of issues that need addressing (including parking, zoning, traffic flow, new business attraction, and programming), it may be difficult to focus and overcome some of the barriers to growth and development without a cohesive plan.

#### *Discussion of Focus Group Findings*

The results from the community focus groups showcase key findings and underscore just how important it is for members to come together and speak with a common voice for their community's future.

Furthermore, while the unique attributes of each study city contributes to its special character, it can also help explain some of the ways that these places vary in the study. For example in the discussion of longitudinal mapping, there are reported signs of Woodruff moving ahead quickly to the end goal of attracting new residential and industrial development. As discussed in the Demographics and Context section, the absence of a community redevelopment

plan may play a role in this movement. According to the interview respondents, the city may be skimming over some important infrastructure components and redevelopment of the downtown area. This situation illustrates an ongoing dilemma and challenge for communities. There are always tradeoffs and sometimes the longer term or more difficult strategy may be postponed to capitalize on a more immediate opportunity. Several discussants conveyed that a more robust and inclusive plan could be developed to address a fuller array of redevelopment needs, and account for these more challenging projects, especially for the core downtown commercial district. As noted in the literature, having a plan is an important milestone in guiding these small cities to economic success (Cleave, et al., 2017). Similarly, the lack of a shared plan is viewed by discussants from Pickens as a major reason for an unclear agenda and delineation of roles between the city leadership and Main Street program. Several changes have taken place since their last plan such as the development of the new Doodle Trail. They believe an updated plan could be a key tool for the community to employ to overcome some of the confusion, bring cohesion to the process, and foster opportunities for leadership groups to work together as a team.

Accordingly, the market retail leakage data for the four cities reflect very different economic profiles. The locational advantages of the Laurens community may play a part in having a market surplus, as it is one of the few cities in the county, giving local residents few other shopping options. Woodruff, on the other hand, is in a positive position for an entirely different reason. The city is positioned to capitalize on the growth in Greenville and Spartanburg, and as the larger metropolitan areas become saturated, investors will be looking for investment opportunities in areas such as Woodruff as the next area for development. Alternatively, Williamston must compete with major cities close by such as Greenville and Anderson to attract investors and market share. As a result, it may be more challenging for Williamston to attract

businesses to locate or expand into the area when other attractive shopping and dining options are available nearby.

These locational advantages and disadvantages are coupled with the socio-demographic areas of the region. Some of the challenges of Laurens discussed in the focus group discussion may be attributed, at least in part, to the complexities of their larger elderly population and racial and ethnic diversity. In Woodruff, as well, a lower educational attainment is reported. However, the most recent data suggests this is on the upswing, creating opportunities for enriched community engagement and volunteer participation as the overall socio-economic conditions in the area improve.

In recognition of these contextual differences, it is apparent that each community has its own ecology of place. They all have specific unique characteristics they can build upon, and challenges they can address to make their communities stronger with improved quality of life. Nonetheless, based on these case studies, there are some shared features that all of the study communities should consider and pursue.

*Leadership:* The city, private business community, and Main Street program need to come together and forge a strong vision and plan for the economic future of their city. The plan must address strategic direction for the short and longer terms, and be focused on which initiatives they wish to collectively work on together. The plan must also address financing of these initiatives, or they may not come readily to fruition. Starting with smaller, incremental change may help build capacity and form an opportunity to recruit new leadership for future civic engagement and leadership opportunities. Moreover, a regional approach is need to collaborate at a broader geographic level (Marsden, 2016).

*Location:* Each community mentioned their location as either a strength or

opportunity for the future. Close proximity to other major population centers positions them well for offering a welcoming and friendly living environment, a more natural setting with less congestion, and a higher quality of life. However, this proximity to other amenities can drive visitors and residents to purchase needed goods and services elsewhere unless the local marketplace can create an inviting place for people to shop, dine and be entertained.

*Quality of Life and Placemaking:* Building on the location, a sense of overall quality of life in a rural community is what many residents and community leaders prefer. Creating distinguishing features can help establish a sense of place and engagement for the residents, but it is more than that. As “Mayberry” is a hypothetical place, the tools for the creation of this place are unique for each community and dependent on a whole host of factors explored in this research study and others.

*Income and Employment:* While many Millennials today are able to choose their home based on quality of life amenities, the majority of the population is still dependent on having access to a viable business and industrial base for employment. Thus, the discussants recommended a combined development approach, focusing on quality of life factors and traditional employment and business recruitment methods. Both strategies should be employed to offer a strong economically viable and attractive place in which to reside. Success is no longer measured in jobs and business attraction alone. Rural towns must also concentrate on improving the standard of living and enhancing the quality of life for all residents so that potential investors will be confident that sustainable development is feasible (Cleave, et al., 2017).

*Health:* Many of the case study participants indicated the tremendous natural assets that their communities offer. These include hiking trails, mountains, parks and other amenities. Several discussants applauded the new pedestrian and bicycle trails that have been built. These healthy lifestyle features are geared to attract a growing health conscious and physically active

population. Features such as these can help make these communities a destination for both active residents and visitors to the area seeking outdoor adventures in a safe and friendly environment.

*Arts and Culture:* There seems to be a growing voice for offering access to more arts and culture for the community along with broader entertainment offerings. The exact relationship to economic development and community vitality is not clearly articulated, but the strong participation and emphasis on festivals and events, may be an indication of the growing interest offering opportunities for community members and visitors to come together and reconnect with others through arts and entertainment experiences.

#### Community Survey of Williamston Residents

Community participation is a critical component of economic and community vitality. Without it, small towns seeking to explore economic development initiatives are severely hampered from achieving the full buy-in of the community. They may even be precluded from achieving long-term gains, without the knowledge, understanding, and support of local residents and informal community leaders. As projects unfold and strategies are somewhat altered in the process of implementation, community consensus building is necessary to assure residents are aware of the changes taking place, and that the projects are undertaken in a manner consistent with community will. To achieve this continuous thread of communication community buy-in from the public must include an ongoing dialogue for community trust and sustainable development to be built and maintained over time (Stiglitz, 2002).

In keeping with this philosophy, the town of Williamston engaged in a deliberative eight-month long activity to develop its *2016 Envision Williamston Community Master Plan*. This effort, which was conducted one year prior to this research study, included a series of Town Hall and stakeholder meetings, a market retail analysis, and one-to-one interviews. Over the course of the subsequent year (FY 2016-2017), the one paid staff person and a team of over 40 community

volunteers, began the process of launching initiatives to address the over 43 strategies identified in the plan. Twelve proposals were written and eleven were fully funded with grants totaling \$321,000. This was just a start, but a strong beginning to this small town's journey toward revitalization. As projects were unveiled, it became apparent that the ability of the town to engage in placemaking for its residents and visitors was not simply a one-off event. Instead, as funding became available, the priorities were modified based on the funders' preferences but remained in keeping with the spirit of the original plan. In addition, while the specific course to be taken was not always clearly articulated in the plan, the discreet initiatives or desired changes were conveyed, leaving it to the implementation team to plot the course and sequencing of events. As such, the team desired a means for gaining ongoing feedback and direction from residents about what they considered the proper and most feasible course of selecting priorities, scheduling activities, and pursuing what would ultimately add to their own quality of life as a community.

To better understand the community it is important to note Williamston's population is just under 4,000 (ESRI, 2016), but is strategically located about 15-20 miles from both Greenville and Anderson, South Carolina. Despite its small size, the town has a vibrancy and history of attracting visitors to the area. In the early 1900s the town was a small resort area and hosted "Chautauquas" or outdoor summer educational events located in the town's historic Mineral Spring Park. This legacy continues in a somewhat different way today in the form of a rich array of community festivals and events. The town draws visitors from a regional level with a combined trade area population of 119,902 people (Town of Williamston, 2016, p. 27). In 2017 alone, over 56,000 people gathered in its Mineral Spring Park for events, including the Christmas in the Park Celebration of Lights, the annual Easter Hunt, and the relatively new Homesteading Festival. The Spring Water Festival, the oldest of the festivals, has recorded attendances of between 3,000-10,000 since its inception 37 years ago. However, visitors to these events often do



not explore the downtown historic area or venture over to the Town Hall municipal center (the former site of Lander University), despite their triadic layout and close proximity to one another.

Williamston is also part of the Williamston-Pelzer CCD (Census County Division) as specified in the *2016 Anderson County Comprehensive Plan*. As noted in the Plan, the Williamston-Pelzer area grew in population by 12.5% between 2000-2010, ranking third in the county (Anderson County, 2016, p. 9). The Williamston-Pelzer area tends to trail behind the Piedmont CCD region, located along the Highway 153 corridor, and the Pendleton CCD that is located near Clemson along Highway 76.

One of the ongoing concerns for communities like Williamston is the attraction and retention of younger populations. Younger populations (ages 24-34 years) are increasingly seeking environmentally friendly and walkable communities first, and then searching for jobs (Speck, 2012, p. 21). Young retirees (ages 55 and older) are also a large market for the town. This mature population is seeking to downsize their household and assume a healthy lifestyle with closely located amenities available in town and in nearby population centers. It is incumbent upon local bedroom communities, such as those located in the Williamston-Pelzer region, to develop the right-mix of cultural, recreational, and housing choices that are easily accessible (AC Plan, p. 10) and will be attractive to these markets.

#### Research Questions

In light of the above activities and important decisions yet to be made, the town of Williamston was poised for a more in-depth inquiry of the community's priorities. The research questions for the Community Voices survey conducted in the town provide the organizing framework for this investigation. They are as follows and can be tracked to the first two overall research questions (RQs) for the study:

- Research Question #1: How do local citizens assess their community? (RQ#1)

- Research Question #2: What economic development priorities do local citizens have for their community and / or themselves? (RQ#1)
- Research Question #3: What quality of life priorities do local citizens have for their community and or themselves? (RQ#1)
- Research Question #4: What is the role of government in economic and quality of life improvements? (RQ#2)
- Research Question #5: Which priorities would give them the highest return on their investment for the future? (RQ#2)
- Research question #6: How should the town pay for improvements in economic development and quality of life? (RQ#2)

And then lastly, the research examines if any of the responses differ or shift by respondent group, indicating variance among the respondents.

#### Data Analysis

The results from each respondent group were incorporated into a combined Excel spreadsheet and converted into a JMP spreadsheet for analysis. JMP is a SAS Institute suite of programs that are utilized for statistical analysis using a graphical interface. JMP is frequently used for research in science, engineering and the social sciences. Researchers conducted frequency distributions for each question. A means comparison analysis was conducted for the five questions with continuous response variables that include levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction or agreement/disagreement. For six of the questions, the results were analyzed using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine if any significant differences existed among demographic groups (e.g., age, race, gender, etc.) in terms of their mean responses to survey questions. Due to the number of non-reports to the demographic questions, the responses from the non-reports were excluded for the gender analysis. The six questions tested for

significance relate to a general assessment of the town as a place to live and the identification and ranking of priority traditional and non-traditional economic development strategies. A summary table of these key questions and the results of the ANOVA analysis are provided in Appendix J.

## Results and Discussion

### *Demographic Profile*

A total of 235 of 483 individuals completed the Community Voices Survey for a response rate of 48.7 percent. Most respondents were from the at-large, no ward designation group (Group 5) and the community stakeholder/community group (Group 6) (see Table 3.2). These groups consisted of the Mayor's community contacts for the at-large response group, and members of the local business association, community economic development volunteers affiliated with Envision Williamston, and volunteers associated with the town's numerous events and projects, largely represented in the stakeholder group.

About three quarters of the respondents agreed to complete the optional "About You" demographic section of the survey. Based on this subsample of survey respondents who provided demographic information, a total of 100 females participated in the survey (56.5%), and 77 males (43.5%) (see Table 4.5).

Participants varied in age from young adults, ages 18-24 (3.4%), to 75 and older (2.2%). The largest share of respondents fell in the 25 to 34, 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 age ranges, representing 20.7%, 31.3%, and 17.9% respectively, or collectively nearly 70% of those designating their age. About 26.7% were ages 55 and older. These findings suggest a somewhat normal distribution of ages, with the 35-44 years old age group providing the largest share of respondents for a single identifiable age group.

Nearly half (47.2%) of the respondents responded as having no children residing in their household, with another large share indicating they had 1 or 2 children (40.0%). About 13% had

three or more children. The vast majority of those participating were White or Caucasian (93.9%), with only 3.9% of Black or African-American decent. A few of Hispanic or American Indian decent also participated (2.2%).

**Table 4.5 Survey Respondents By Gender, Age, Children, and Race**

	Count	All Responses	Excludes NR
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	100	42.6%	56.5%
Male	77	32.8%	43.5%
NR	58	24.7%	
Total	235	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Age</b>			
18 to 24	6	2.6%	3.4%
25 to 34	37	15.8%	20.7%
35 to 44	56	23.8%	31.3%
45 to 54	32	13.6%	17.9%
55 to 64	28	11.9%	15.6%
65 to 74	16	6.8%	8.9%
75 or older	4	1.7%	2.2%
NR	56	23.8%	
Total	235	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Children</b>			
1 child	36	15.3%	20.0%
2 children	36	15.3%	20.0%
3 children	18	7.7%	10.0%
4 children	3	1.3%	1.7%
More than 4 children	2	0.9%	1.1%
None	85	36.2%	47.2%
NR	55	23.4%	
Total	235	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Race</b>			
White or Caucasian	168	71.5%	93.9%
Black or African-American	7	3.0%	3.9%
Am. Indian or Alaskan Native	2	0.9%	1.1%
Hispanic or Latino	2	0.9%	1.1%
NR	56	23.8%	
Total	235	100.0%	100.0%

A majority of the respondents were residents of the town (57.4%). About one in five were property owners (21.3%), and a similar proportion were workers in Town (19.6%). About one in 10 were local business owners (8.5%), and a very small proportion reported that they did not live or work in town (3.4%) (see Table 4.6).

Many of the respondents indicated that they were active in their local church in the community (37.5%), followed by the educational community (28.5%). Others reported that they were part of the sports and recreational community (20.9%), the business community (20.4%), the public service (18.7%), or civic community (18.3%). Approximately 10% of the respondents indicated that they were active in the arts and cultural community (11.9%) or the health care community (10.2%).

A large share of the respondents indicated they had resided in town for 10 years or more (58.1%), with the next largest share being 1-3 years (17.6%), followed by 4-6 years (13.5%). Another 6.8% were relatively new residents having resided in town for less than a full year.

The demographic profile of the respondents is that they are, in large part, White, female, ages 25-54, have 0-2 children, reside in town or own property there, and are active in their church and/or other educational or business, public service, or civic community group.

**Table 4.6. Survey Respondents By Respondent Type(s), Group Affiliation(s), and Length of Residency**

	Count	All Responses	Excludes NR
<b>Type of Respondent (Invited to mark all that apply)</b>			
A resident of Town	135	57.4%	
A property owner in Town	50	21.3%	
A worker in Town	46	19.6%	
A business owner in Town	20	8.5%	
I do not live or work in Town.	8	3.4%	
Total	235	110.2%	
<b>Group Affiliation (Invited to mark all that apply)</b>			
Church community	88	37.4%	
Educational community	67	28.5%	
Sports and recreation community	49	20.9%	
Business community	48	20.4%	
Public service community	44	18.7%	
Civic community	43	18.3%	
Arts and cultural community	28	11.9%	
Health care community	24	10.2%	
Total	235	166.4%	
<b>Length of Residency</b>			
1-3 years	26	11.1%	17.6%
10 years or more	86	36.6%	58.1%
4-6 years	20	8.5%	13.5%
7-9 years	6	2.6%	4.1%
Less than one (1) year	10	4.3%	6.8%
NR	87	37.0%	
Total	235	100.0%	100.0%

#### *General Assessment of the Community*

In response to Question 1. What are your reasons for choosing to live and/or work in the Town?, respondents provided a host of “other” responses for why they live in Williamston (76.7%). In this open-ended response area, multiple respondents wrote in that they chose the town of Williamston because this is the place they were born and raised. Others indicated that they wished to be close to family members and friends that they know. Less frequent, but worth

noting, is the recognition of the convenience to Anderson and Greenville (for shopping and dining, access to health care, and for convenient commutes to work) (see Table 4.7.).

The other leading reasons for residing in the town of Williamston include “location” (47.7%), followed by “quality of schools” (35.3%), and a “good place to raise children” (35.3%). Following close behind were a “sense of community” (27.7%), “cost of living”(25.1%), and “quality of life” (23.8%). Older residents ages 55-64 were particularly attracted to the town’s sense of community as were those with no children, although the differences were not statistically significant. There were statistically significant differences by age for the ranking of “low cost of living” ( $F=2.144$ ,  $p=.040$ ). However, persons 25-34 years and 35-44 years had a similar ranking of “low cost of living” as one of their leading reasons for choosing to live in town (32.4-39.3%), and those ages 45-54 years and 65-74 years are also similar in their rankings of the cost of living (25.0%).

The ranking of “quality of life” also showed significant differences among persons with or without children in the household ( $t=3.131$ ,  $p=.046$ ) and property owners ( $t=7.181$ ,  $p=.008$ ). Those with no children had a higher response rate for quality of life (32.9%) compared to those with children (17.9%), as did property owners (38.0%), over those who were not property owners (20.0%). The “quality of life” aspects of the town further varied by age ( $F=2.356$ ,  $p=.024$ ). Quality of life was generally marked as an important reason to live in town with increasing age with rankings of 16.1% to 16.7% among respondents 18-44 years, but ranking over 50% among the 65 and older population.

The low crime rate was of interest to the young; those between the ages of 18-24 years (33.3%), and the older population, ages 75 and older (50.0%), but there were no statistical differences by age.

**Table 4.7.** Q1. What are your reasons for choosing to live and/or work in the Town?  
Please mark your top three (3) choices.

Level	Count	%
All Responses	235	100.0%
Other	180	76.7%
Location	112	47.7%
Quality of schools	83	35.3%
Good place to raise children	83	35.3%
Sense of community	65	27.7%
Cost of living	59	25.1%
Quality of life	56	23.8%
Low crime rate	34	14.5%
Job opportunities	24	10.2%
Recreation opportunities	15	6.4%

Question 2 asked how satisfied are you with the condition of the following elements of Town services and features? The top satisfaction score on a scale of 1-5 (1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied) was provided to the category of “parks” available in Williamston (Mean = 4.07) (see Table 4.8.). The town’s historic Mineral Spring Park was especially noted as one of the respondents’ favorite features throughout the survey. In addition, while only a few respondents identified the low crime rate as reason to move to Williamston, the level of satisfaction with “police and fire protection” was highly rated, ranking second in overall satisfaction (Mean = 3.91). The third highest score was given to the “schools” (Mean = 3.80), followed by “signage”(Mean = 3.34) and “sidewalks” (Mean = 3.08), although the ranking is relatively neutral with a score of 3. These later topics underscore the importance of navigational features and walkability in the town.

The factors receiving the lowest ratings are important to consider too. Respondents were least satisfied with the available commercial properties (2.5%). This may be due, at least in part, to the number of vacant and blighted properties located along Main Street. Respondents also gave



poor ratings for the water and sewer system, and the quality of the streets and roads. Virtually all groups dislike commercial properties, ranking them either last or in the bottom three items for all respondent groups. Also needing work are the water and sewer system, and the roadways; albeit streets and roads are somewhat liked by those who don't live or work in town, suggesting the side roads along residential areas may be of the greatest concern.

**Table 4.8.** Q 2. How satisfied are you with the condition of the following elements of Town services and features? Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.

COMPARE MEANS – OVERALL	
Services	Mean
Parks	4.07
Police & fire protection	3.91
Schools	3.80
Signage	3.34
Sidewalks	3.08
Residential properties	3.05
Growth management	2.88
Streets & roads	2.80
Water & sewer	2.71
Commercial properties	2.48

Scale: very satisfied (5), satisfied (4), neutral (3), dissatisfied (2), very dissatisfied (1), and don't know (0).

As it pertains to satisfaction of different Town elements, Question 3 finds, on a scale of 1-5, that respondents indicated that they enjoy “Williamston as a place to live” (Mean = 3.92) (See Table 4.9.). The second highest rating is attributed to the town's attraction as “a place to raise children” (Mean = 3.69). Less strong, but still high, was the rating given to the town as “a place to retire” (Mean = 3.18). These ratings were near universal across groups. However, some groups did rate the town highly as “a place to work.” This was especially true for 18-24 year olds, business owners, and workers in town. The lowest rating was attributed to the town as “a place to own and operate a small business” (2.50). This was not rated highly for any of the demographic

respondent groups. From an economic development perspective, this finding underscores the tremendous challenge for the town in terms of new business recruitment. However, since business owners did indicate a higher level of satisfaction with the town as a place to work, perhaps they are knowledgeable about opportunities and business success stories that are less widely known or shared across the broader community. Local business owners may also have key insight into ways to make the town a friendlier place for businesses to operate.

**Table 4.9.** Q3. Overall Ratings of the Town. Please mark the box that best represents your level of satisfaction with the Town elements listed below.

COMPARE MEANS – OVERALL	
Satisfaction Rating	Mean
As a place to live.	3.92
As a place to raise children.	3.69
As a place to retire.	3.18
As a place to work.	2.77
As a place to own and operate a small business.	2.50
Scale: very satisfied (5), satisfied (4), neutral (3), dissatisfied (2), very dissatisfied (1), and don't know (0).	

#### *Traditional Economic Development Strategies*

The next set of questions focused on research question #2: What economic development priorities do local citizens have for their community and / or themselves? Related to this, Question 4 asked respondents to indicate how strongly they would support or oppose identified economic development options. Nearly every respondent group ranked the Town's efforts to improve the "overall look and feel of the Town" (Mean = 4.6) as being among their top three economic development strategies (see Table 4.10.). Two other leading strategies tied for second are the "Town's efforts to attract new businesses to the area," and the "Town's efforts to make the historic downtown area a shopping and dining destination" (both Means =4.5). Next preferred in terms of support were the "Town's efforts to help residents shop local" (Mean =4.4), and the

“Town’s active support for expansion of existing businesses” (Mean = 4.3). Least favorable was the “Town’s efforts to attract more visitors to the area” (Mean = 4.2), but still receiving a relatively favorable score with over 4 points, on a scale of 1-5. There was some limited opposition to attracting more visitors to the area, as well as making the historic downtown a shopping and dining destination or expanding existing businesses, but these responses were very much in the minority.

**Table 4.10.** Q4. Please tell us how strongly you would support or oppose the economic development options below. Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.

Compare Means – Overall	
Economic Development Options	Mean
Total Responses	220
The Town’s efforts to improve the overall look and feel of the Town	4.56
The Town’s efforts to attract new businesses to the area	4.46
The Town’s efforts to make the historic downtown area a shopping and dining destination	4.46
The Town’s efforts to help residents shop local (Reduce retail leakage)	4.39
The Town’s active support for expansion of existing businesses	4.34
The Town’s efforts to attract more visitors to the area	4.21

Scale: strongly support (5), support (4), neutral (3), oppose (2), strongly oppose (1), and don’t know (0).

Along these same lines, Question 5 asked respondents which of the following business attraction, expansion, and retention activities local government or economic development organizations should pursue. Respondents were more likely to select the “identification of vacant and underutilized buildings for development or redevelopment” over any other economic development priority (71.9%) (see Table 4.11.). While nearly every demographic group supported this option as their number one concern, there were only statistical differences based on residence ( $t=12.798$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Over 80% of the resident respondents marked this item as one of their top three priorities whereas 60.0% of the nonresident respondents did. Second, more than a

third (36.6%) of all respondents were supportive of offering “a Main Street Challenge that would provide first year rental assistance to one to two new businesses.” This redevelopment option showed statistical differences by age ( $F=3.041$ ,  $p<.005$ ). Persons 18-24 and 45-54 years old were particularly supportive using a post hoc analysis of the differences. Ranking third overall, 35.3% agreed that the town should “offer financial incentives to existing property owners and local businesses for expansion into new product or service lines.” Least popular were the provision of “networking” or “information sharing drop-ins,” “one-stop shop” for business inquiry centers, or “shared space” incubators for new small businesses.

Selection of “pop-up shops” varied significantly by age ( $F=2.620$ ,  $p=.0128$ ), race ( $F=11.261$ ,  $p=.001$ ), and gender ( $F=6.008$ ,  $p=.015$ ). However, about a third of persons 25-34 and 45-54 years of age were similarly interested in this option, at 32.4% and 34.4% respectively. Blacks (71.4%) and females (33.0%) are also most likely to prefer this option.

The preference for “One-stop shops” for business inquiries that can be conducted under one roof varied significantly by race ( $t=12.726$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Blacks (57.1%) are much more likely to prefer this option than Non-Blacks (11.8%).

The differences among groups suggest that there are only a few clear economic development targets that are widely agreed upon: the redevelopment of vacant buildings, the provision of incentives for new and existing business owners, and perhaps a speculative building development project. Pop-up shops, as an alternative, could be a more affordable option in the short-term.

**Table 4.11.** Q5. Which of the following business attraction, expansion, and retention activities should your local government or economic development organization pursue? Please mark your top three (3) choices.

Level	Count	%
Identify vacant and underutilized buildings for development or redevelopment	169	71.9%
Offer a “Main Street Challenge” that would provide 1st year rental assistance to 2-3 new businesses	86	36.6%
Offer financial incentives to existing property owners and local businesses for expansion into new product or service lines	83	35.3%
Develop speculative buildings as “move-in ready” shell space to attract new businesses	79	33.6%
Offer pop-up shops to try-out new business ventures	50	21.3%
Help existing businesses prepare for major corporate entries into the market	43	18.3%
Encourage shared space arrangements for new small businesses (incubators)	32	13.6%
Offer a “One-stop shop” for business inquiries	31	13.2%
Conduct networking/information sharing “Drop-ins” for businesses and town officials	25	10.6%

The next question addresses which marketing strategies were the most beneficial to promote the Town to prospective business owners and visitors. Strategic marketing is another traditional approach to economic development. In this respect, the town’s success would be measured by growth in new firms to the area and in visitor attraction. The leading marketing strategy embraced by the survey respondents is to hold a series of “First Friday events,” offering evening shopping with live music and discounts at local businesses (55.7%) (see Table 4.12.). Another moderately popular approach is to establish a “buy local campaign” (37.4%). A nearly equal proportion (33.6%) also support a “mobile application” for smart devices entitled “What’s Happening in Williamston” or something similar that can be accessed using a mobile device. Less popular, but still supported by a quarter of the respondents (25.1%) is the development of “welcome signs at key entrances to the town.” This marketing feature combined with the “look and feel” of the town in question 4 above, underscores the respondents’ value placement on first impressions and overall aesthetics of the environment. Least popular were the creation of

marketing bumper stickers, message boards, and promotional materials for special events and guests.

However, there are statistically significant differences by respondent group concerning the most preferred marketing strategies. The First Friday events and buy local campaigns are very popular across multiple groups, but do show statistical variation by age ( $F=5.846$ ,  $p<.0001$ ;  $F=3.849$ ,  $p<.001$ , respectively). The level of support for First Fridays declines with age with the majority of persons 18-24 years old ranking this strategy highly (83.3%), and only about a third of persons 65-74 years old ranking it among their top strategies (37.5%). Support for the mobile app also varies significantly by age ( $F=2.753$ ,  $p=.009$ ). As would be expected, the recognition of the need for a mobile app peaks among the 25-34 age group, and then diminishes with age, especially among those who are 55 and older. Support of billboards and way finding signs show statistically significant differences between property and non-property owners ( $t=4.430$ ,  $p=.036$ ). Property owners (30.0%) are the more likely than non-property owners (16.8%) to support these signs.

There were statistically significant differences by age in recognition of the need for a welcome center. Interest in this option varies significantly by age ( $F=3.053$ ,  $p=.004$ ). Mature adults (ages 65 and older) are most likely to desire this option (50.0% to 75.0%). The responses for a welcome center also show differences among those households with and without children ( $t=5.937$ ,  $p=.003$ ). Those with no children are much more likely to desire a center (32.9%) compared to those with children (20.0%). The need for a welcome sign also varies by whether the respondent works in town or not ( $t=3.672$ ,  $p=.057$ ). Nearly a third (32.6%) of local workers responded in favor of this option compared to 19.6% of non-workers.

**Table 4.12.** Q6. Which of the following marketing strategies do you feel are most needed or beneficial to promote the Town to prospective business owners and visitors? Please mark your top three (3) choices.

Level	Count	%
First Friday events – evening shopping with live music and discounts at local businesses	131	55.7%
A “Buy Local” campaign	88	37.4%
Mobile app on "What's Happening in Williamston"	79	33.6%
Welcome signs at key entrances to the Town	59	25.1%
Welcome Center or Visitor’s Center	52	22.1%
Billboards and Way-finding signs	46	19.6%
Promotional materials (brochures, rack cards, dining and shopping guides)	41	17.4%
Electronic message board	28	11.9%
Bumper stickers and T-shirts with imprints of “Williamston – spring to life!”	19	8.1%

### *Quality of Life Strategies*

To address quality of life issues, Question 7 asked which of the following activities local government or economic development organizations should pursue to make the Town a more desirable and attractive place to live and work. Two thirds of the respondents (67.7%) identify “building façade improvements” (e.g., painting, lighting, and awnings) as the most appropriate quality of life activity for the town to pursue (see Table 4.13). Façade improvement as a favored economic development option does, however, show statistical difference by age ( $F=11.319$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). This occurrence is largely due to the older population placing less weight on this option, whereas persons under age 64 rate this option very highly, in the 75.0% to 100% range.

The second top priority was to engage in “neighborhood revitalization” (55.8%). There were statistically significant differences by age for neighborhood revitalization ( $F=4.367$ ,  $p=.0001$ ). In contrast to façade improvements, this option was preferred more by those ages 65-74 years (75.0%) as compared to persons 18-24 years old (50.0%). The third highest preferred economic development activity is “banners, attractive gateways, and other streetscaping

activities” (30.2%). Again, there were statistically significant differences by age for this item ( $F=3.226$ ,  $p=.003$ ). The younger adult group (ages 18-24) was mostly likely to indicate this preference (50.0%) along with the 35-44 year olds (48.2%), whereas a smaller portion of persons 65-74 ranked this option highly (18.8%). A close fourth priority is “public art displays” such as building murals or a “Mustangs on Main” display similar to the “Mice on Main” in Greenville (25.5%). Statistically significant differences were once again observed by age ( $F=3.150$ ,  $p=.003$ ), with wide variation across the groups. Interestingly, persons ages 45-54 ranked this option highly (40.6%) whereas none of the 18-24 year old respondents did so. Finally, more parks and natural spaces such as gardens are ranked fifth overall. There are statistical differences by age ( $F=3.033$ ,  $p=.005$ ). Older persons ages 75 and older rate it highly (50.0%), as do the 18-24 year old respondents (50.0%), but other groups are less likely to do so. The provision of more parks and green spaces also varies by race ( $t=5.204$ ,  $p=.023$ ). Blacks highly favor this option (57.1%) compared to Non-Blacks (21.1%). Households with the presence of children also show statistical differences ( $t=10.881$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). More than a third of the respondents with children (35.8%) are likely to indicate this preference, compared to only 17.7% of those with no children present in the home.

**Table 4.13.** Q7. Which of the following activities should your local government or economic development organization pursue to make the Town a more desirable and attractive place to live and work? Please mark your top three (3) choices.

Level	Count	%
Building facade improvements (e.g., painting, lighting, awnings)	159	67.7%
Neighborhood revitalization	131	55.7%
Banners, attractive gateways and other streetscaping activities	71	30.2%
Public art displays (e.g., building murals, Mustangs on Main)	60	25.5%
More community parks and gardens	52	22.1%
A performing arts center	37	15.7%
Local historic markers	32	13.6%



A key factor of quality of life initiatives centers around health and wellness. The next question asked respondents how local government or economic development organizations should be involved in encouraging healthy lifestyles and quality of life. There is a strong preference by the respondents for three main health related activities. The leading priority is the provision of an integrated “bicycle and pedestrian trails” system (51.9%) (see Table 4.14). There were statistically significant differences for this type of amenity by age ( $F=3.856$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Bike and walking trails are especially favored by the 45-54, 55-64, and 65-74 year olds (62.5-68.7%) as compared to persons ages 75 and older (25.0%). Statistical differences are also observed for workers in Town ( $t=5.57$ ,  $p=.019$ ).

The second most highly favored health amenity is the provision of a “farmer’s market” (48.1%), recommended by nearly half of the respondents. Statistically significant differences occur by respondent age group ( $F=6.819$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Persons 55 and older recommend this program as their top priority (68.8% to 78.6%), compared to the rates among other groups such as persons 45-54 years old (40.6%) or persons 18-24 years old (50.0%).

Closely following the farmer’s market as a priority is a “gym or fitness center” (46.8%). There are statistical differences by age once again ( $F=7.096$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). People 18-24 years are most likely to desire this amenity (83.3%), whereas those ages 75 and older are least likely to do so (25.0%). There are also statistical difference for households with children ( $t=15.43$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of respondents with children residing in the home desire a gym, compared to only 44.7% for those without children.

A “skateboard park” and “tennis courts” are the least desirable options overall. However, desirability for some of moderately rated amenities varied by age. There were statistically significant differences by age in preference for a community pool ( $F=2.619$ ,  $p=.013$ ). For example, individuals ages 18-24 years are interested in the community pool option (50.0%), as

compared to none among respondents 75 and older. There were statistically significant differences by age in preference for parks and children's activities too ( $F=2.465$ ,  $p=.019$ ). About half of all respondent groups ages 65 and older were interested in parks and children's facilities, compared to only 16.7% of persons 18-24 years. Desirability of a sports complex indicates statistical differences by age and business ownership ( $F=2.284$ ,  $p=.029$ ; and  $t=4.350$ ,  $p=.038$  respectively). Persons 45-54 are most interested in the sports complex (37.5%), compared to persons 18-24 years (16.7%). Forty percent of all business owners are interested in this option as well, compared to only 20.0% among non-business owners.

**Table 4.14.** Q8. Which health and wellness programs should your local government or economic development organization promote in order to encourage healthy lifestyles and high quality of life? Please mark your top three (3) choices.

Level	Count	%
Bicycle and pedestrian trails	122	51.9%
Farmer's market	113	48.1%
Gym or fitness center	110	46.8%
Parks and children's facilities	72	30.6%
Community pool	58	24.7%
Sports complex	51	21.7%
Miniature golf	44	18.7%
Tennis courts	17	7.2%
Skateboard park	6	2.6%

To ensure broad community buy-in and support, ongoing community engagement is necessary to build successful community planning and implementation programs. Question 9 asked respondents which programs local government or economic development organizations should pursue to encourage community involvement. The leading social engagement priority is the provision of "community events and parades" (63.8%) (see Table 4.15). This is a widely shared priority across the vast majority of respondent groups, but there are statistical differences

by age ( $F=11.972$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Interestingly, community events rate most highly among the 35-44 year olds (87.5%), and lowest among the 75 and older group (50.0%).

Also ranking highly was the provision of “local contests” such as the scarecrow decorating and photography contests to showcase local creativity and talent (52.3%). While most groups rate community events the highest, there are statistical differences by age ( $F=7.166$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), and property ownership ( $t=15.044$ ,  $p=.0001$ ). Persons 65 and older score these contests over events and parades (75.0%), as do local property owners (76.0%). A third and somewhat surprising recommendation is the addition of “movie nights” (43.8%). This community engagement activity shows statistical differences by age ( $F=5.411$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) and gender ( $t=16.936$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Younger age groups, 18-24 and 25-34 are most likely to rank this activity highly (66.7% and 64.8% respectively), as are females (65.0%). Another popular activity identified by select groups is the addition of a biking club or related group, such as “Friends of the Park.” Interest varied significantly by age ( $F=3.631$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and whether or not children are present in the household ( $t=7.680$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Persons 35-44 and 45-54 years of age are most likely to support this option (50.0%), as are households with children (45.3%). On the other hand, the provision of an “arts crawl”(14.5%) and “historic tours” (16.2%) are the least popular.

With two-thirds or more of certain respondent groups conveying their interest in social activities, these results underscore the importance of community engagement activities, especially as they pertain to opportunities to socialize together, participate in some friendly competition, or simply enjoy a movie together.

**Table 4.15.** Q9. Which community engagement programs should your local government or economic development organization pursue to encourage community involvement? Please mark your top three (3) choices.

Level	Count	%
Community events & parades	150	63.8%
Local contests – e.g., Scarecrow or Photography Contest	123	52.3%
Movie nights	103	43.8%
Clubs – e.g., biking, Friends of the Park	81	34.5%
Historic tours	38	16.2%
Arts crawl or walk to view local artist demonstrations	34	14.5%

### *Looking Forward*

As communities consider spending public resources on economic and community development goals, it is important to understand the support of the community for these objectives. Question 13 asked citizens the extent of involvement the town should have in improving economic viability. Given the wide array of economic development and quality of life strategies considered, it is important to observe that more than two-thirds of the respondents (68.5%) believe that the Town government should be highly or somewhat involved in improving the economic vitality for the Town in the future (see Table 4.16). About one in five (21.3%) did not respond to this question. Less than ten percent have no opinion or are neutral on the matter (6.8%), and only a small portion believe the town should not be involved at all or not very involved (3.0%). This finding is consistent across most socio-demographic groups with only a few of the respondents suggesting that the Town leadership should have a low level of involvement.

**Table 4.16.** Q13. Please tell us to what extent Town government should be involved in improving economic viability. Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.

Level	Count	%
Total	235	100.0%
Highly involved	101	43.0%
Somewhat involved	60	25.5%
No response	50	21.3%
Neutral	14	6.0%
Not very involved	5	2.1%
No opinion	3	1.3%
Not at all involved	2	0.9%

The next question focused on future planning and where the Town should focus its efforts over the next 10 years. In looking toward the future, the leading activities recommended for the Town are twofold. First, the Town leaders should “improve the overall look and feel of the Town” (Mean = 3.65), and “attract new business/commercial/service development” (Mean = 3.65) (see Table 4.17). The third recommendation is to “increase recreational opportunities” (Mean = 3.49), which underscores the highly rated activities related to health and wellness. Not far behind are to “maintain/improve open space” (Mean = 3.44), and “preserve or restore historic structures” (Mean = 3.38), and “improve traffic flow, roads, and signage” (Mean = 3.34). Least high on the priority list are to “increase residential construction” (Mean = 2.72) and “increase public parking” (Mean = 2.93).

**Table 4.17.** Q14. Over the next ten (10) years, the Town should: Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.

Economic Development Options for the Future	Mean
Improve overall look and feel of the Town	3.65
Attract new business/commercial/service development	3.65
Increase recreational opportunities	3.49
Maintain/improve open space	3.44
Preserve or restore historic structures	3.38
Improve traffic flow, roads and signage	3.34

Protect the environment	3.28
Control the rate and type of development	2.94
Increase public parking	2.93
Increase residential construction	2.72

Scale: strongly agree (4), agree (3), neutral (2), disagree (1), and strongly disagree (0).

Question 15 asked what kinds of commercial development the Town should attract and promote if respondents believed this to be an issue. When specifically asked about future commercial development, the respondents are remarkably consistent in recommending the addition of new sit down “restaurants other than fast food” (66.9%) (see Table 4.18). Many also expressed their desire for a “supermarket” (63.4%). Next on the agenda should be the inclusion of more “entertainment facilities” (41.7%) and “coffee shops” (41.7%). The least desired commercial additions include “convenience stores” (1.8%), “auto dealer/service stations” (3.4%), and “financial institutions” (3.4%).

**Table 4.18.** Q15. If you agree with that the Town needs commercial development, what kinds of commercial development do you think the Town should attract and promote? Please mark your top five (5) choices.

Level	Count	%
Restaurants other than fast food	157	66.8%
Supermarkets	149	63.4%
Entertainment facilities	98	41.7%
Coffee shops	98	41.7%
Clothing stores	63	26.8%
Fast food restaurants	38	16.2%
Sporting goods store	36	15.3%
Home and garden supplies	34	14.5%
Gift/tourist shops	33	14.0%
Hotels/motels	30	12.8%
Personal services (e.g., salons)	26	11.1%
Discount stores	20	8.5%
Financial institutions	8	3.4%
Auto dealer/service stations	8	3.4%
None of the above. The Town does not need commercial development.	4	1.7%
Convenient/drug stores	3	1.3%

### *Impact Strategies*

The next set of questions had respondents identify priorities based on what they believe will bring the Town the largest return on investment in the future. Specifically, Question 10 focused on which activities respondents identify as having the greatest impact on the community and for themselves as individuals. This two-pronged question asks respondents to identify the activities that would have the greatest impact on the town, and then for themselves, personally. The results are informative and suggest a willingness to look both within, as to how strategies will impact themselves specifically, and then beyond to the town as a whole (see Table 4.19.). With regards to the greatest impact on the town, respondents rank “offering financial incentives to attract new businesses and business expansion” as the highest priority overall (60.0%). Ranking a very close second is “improving the look and feel of the town through beautification efforts” (59.1%). Third, the respondents agree that “hosting local events to attract visitors to the Town” yields a high return for the community (53.6%).

With regards to greatest impact to the individual him or herself, the responses vary, with one exception. The top ranking activity is “improving the health and recreational activities and facilities” (43.4%) of the town. Next, they rate “expanding social activities of the town” (32.8%) as having a high personal impact, closely followed by “improving the look and feel of the town through beautification efforts” (26.8%).

These results show that for direct economic development goals, incentives are needed to attract and retain new businesses, and then bring in new visitors to town to enjoy those amenities. For themselves personally, residents value health and fitness activities, as well as opportunities for social interaction. The strategy of beautification, however, is shared by both aims. It is one of the most impactful and cross-beneficial activities that a town can employ. It is a top ranking strategy for both the town’s benefit as well as that of the individual community member. Thus, if

a town wishes to employ a strategy that benefits residents, guests and local business owners, beautification is a key mechanism for all to enjoy. A twofold set of strategies may need to be employed; one that brings people and businesses in, but another that keeps them coming back and enjoying the town for years to come through quality of life enhancements.

**Table 4.19.** Q10. Which of the following activities do you think has the greatest impact on the community, and to you as an individual resident and/or member of the business community?

Greatest Impact on the Town	Count	%	Greatest Impact on Me	Count	%
Offering financial incentives to attract new businesses and business expansion	141	60.0%	Improving the health and recreational activities and facilities	102	43.4%
<i>Improving the look and feel of the Town through beautification efforts</i>	<i>139</i>	<b>59.1%</b>	Expanding the social activities of the Town	77	32.8%
Hosting local events to attract visitors to the Town	126	53.6%	<i>Improving the look and feel of the Town through beautification efforts</i>	63	<b>26.8%</b>
Promoting the existing assets of the Town	89	37.9%	Improving the art and cultural offerings of the Town	42	17.9%
Expanding the social activities of the Town	83	35.3%	Promoting the existing assets of the Town	35	14.9%
Improving the art and cultural offerings of the Town	73	31.1%	Hosting local events to attract visitors to the Town	28	11.9%
Improving the health and recreational activities and facilities	69	29.4%	Offering financial incentives to attract new businesses and business expansion	24	10.2%

Question 11 asked respondents to identify two items that bring the Town the most value. Of all the items discussed, the issue of beautification is the most often mentioned response (n=36). Next is the offering of financial incentives (n=24); closely followed by local events (n=21), and health and wellness related activities (n=19). The second tier of responses includes business development and recruitment (n = 18); followed by social activities (n = 14); and then arts and cultural activities (n=8).



Collectively, these responses, once again, underscore a combined set of priorities that include traditional economic development activities (beautification, financial incentives and business recruitment), combined with nontraditional quality of life activities (health and fitness, social activities, and cultural amenities). They also suggest that the return on investment for the town can be captured through some of these more intangible service and community engagement activities.

Along these same lines, the next question asked respondents if they were to invest in one economic vitality activity, that would promote the economic wellbeing of the Town, what would that strategy be? To allow for further discussion and the identification of additional economic vitality items, this inquiry was an open-ended response question. Using a content analysis approach that relies on word frequencies, four leading activities are identified. The first is to create a business friendly environment that encourages and attracts new businesses to town (n = 57). These include the offering of amenities such as a grocery store, more restaurants and entertainment, along with the provision of incentives. The second is to add the “fun factor” of bringing additional health and recreational facilities and programming to the area, especially for family entertainment (n = 14). The third is to focus on beautification, cleaning up the yards and general aesthetics, and getting buildings ready for occupancy (n = 11). Finally, the respondents articulated the need to get the word out on the town and its amenities so that others will know about the town and what it has to offer (n = 2).

To allow for further discussion and the identification of additional community vitality items, a final open-ended response question (Question 18) is included to assess community vitality investment priorities. Using a content analysis approach that relies on word frequencies, five leading activities are identified. The most frequently mentioned item is to, once again, bring in the fun factor, with bicycle and trails, a gym, and other recreational activities (n = 51). Second,

is to support business attraction. While this is a direct economic activity, it also benefits the local population and its quality of life (n = 13). Third, is to improve outdoor spaces including sidewalks (n = 6), and add public art or performing arts festivals to the many offerings of the town (n = 4). Also important to their community's vitality is to once again, engage in beautification, especially of the parks, gateways, and general clean up for the town (n = 4).

This analysis would be incomplete were it not to at least examine the tolerance for the financial commitment required to provide some of these opportunities to the Town. Question 16 asks to what extent individuals would support certain measures to pay for these improvements. Respondents were asked to consider a listing of ten possible ways to help finance some of the desired economic and community vitality strategies. Using a means comparison, the respondents are overwhelmingly in favor of using “grants programs” as the preferred financing method for supporting these community improvements (Mean = 4.43) (see Table 4.20). Second is the “offering [of] tax incentives for new businesses” (Mean = 4.18); and third is the “offering [of] tax rebates for new businesses” (Mean = 4.16), both closely and highly rated. Some of the groups also scored obtaining “private donations” as a viable means for supporting these improvements. Specifically, men (Mean = 4.18); persons ages 18-34 (Means = 4.08-4.17); and 55-74 and 75 and older respondents (Means = 4.44-5.00) supported this idea. Individuals with no children, Blacks, property owners, and people not residing in town also scored this option highly. Other groups liked the option of helping through business association support, particularly females (Mean = 4.18); persons 35-44 (Mean = 4.35); persons 55-64 years (Mean = 4.19); households with no children (Mean = 4.10); and business owners, property owners, and workers (Means = 4.26-4.35). A few groups are in favor of public / private partnerships such as those who are younger, 18-24 year olds (Mean = 3.50) and older, 65-74 year old group (Mean = 3.82). There is opposition to “increases in service fees” (Mean = 2.59) and issuing a “bond referendum” (Mean = 2.88).

**Table 4.20.** Q16. To what extent would you support the Town’s using the following mechanisms to implement some of the Town improvements?

Financing Mechanisms	Mean
Grants programs	4.43
Offering tax incentives for new business attraction	4.18
Offering tax rebates for new businesses	4.16
Business association support	4.12
Private donations	4.08
Public / Private partnerships	3.94
Voluntary purchase of dedication plaques	3.39
User fees	3.07
Bond referendum	2.88
Increases in service fees	2.59

Scale: strongly support (5), support (4), neutral (3), oppose (2), strongly oppose (1), and don’t know (0).

#### Discussion of Community Survey

The Community Voices survey provides a rich set of insights into the community’s perspectives on economic and community vitality. First and foremost, respondents value their strong families, social and historical ties the community, and its natural amenities such as the historic Mineral Spring Park. They also enjoy having a strong public safety system and a highly rated school system. Concurrently, respondents are highly satisfied with the town of Williamston as a great place to live and raise their children, or even retire, if they older. However, many expressed concern about the commercial properties and neglected infrastructure, and few see the town as a good place to start a business, unless a significant number of financial and tax incentives are offered to attract new business and foster business expansion among existing merchants.

The results further emphasize the need to improve the overall look and feel of the town, before more people will want to visit or live in the community. Most consider this to be the top priority. Key strategies that are highly rated include the renovation of vacant and underutilized

buildings, making building façade improvements, and incorporating streetscaping features such as welcome signs, banners, and public art. Coupled with these improvements, the respondents would like to see new businesses and activities come to town. A Main Street Challenge, such as the once recently employed, is highly rated as are the offering of other financial incentives to help defray the costs of starting up a new commercial venture or financing a business expansion. Once operational, the respondents would like to introduce some First Friday events with live music and other entertainment to attract a more robust consumer market to the town. They also recommend offering a “buy local” campaign and creating a mobile app to help attract more visitors to enjoy the town’s enhanced amenities.

To benefit their quality of life, respondents are nearly universally in favor of a bicycle and pedestrian trail system. This amenity is something that residents and visitors of all ages are able to enjoy and can accommodate a wide variety of schedules. The older set also would like to continue having a farmers’ market available for fresh produce and locally made goods, whereas a younger population would benefit from a fitness center.

Nearly all demographic groups rank the provision of events and parades as one of their favorite community engagement activities. Many also like special contests, especially among the 65 and over group, which gives residents an opportunity to engage with their neighbors in some friendly competition. For families and younger groups, the addition of movie nights at local venues such as the park or the community center are recommended to bring people together to socialize and share together as a community.

When asked about the level of government participation in these activities, survey participants indicated that they strongly favor leadership involvement. Nearly 70 percent felt that the government should be highly or somewhat involved, and only 3 percent indicated a preference for little to no participation. The twofold highest priorities by the government should

be to improve the look and feel of the town, while also attracting new businesses and services. This should be supplemented with increased recreational opportunities to round out the town's offerings, with strong ties to the health and wellness values of the town's respondents. The new businesses desired are consistent with prior research that recommends the addition of new restaurants and a supermarket for the town, coupled with some entertainment, coffee shops, and other types of retail such as a clothing or sporting goods store. And, while what will benefit the town and the individual resident may often diverge, they absolutely converge on the need to improve the look and feel of the town overall.

Respondents openly support the creation of a business friendly environment as the town moves forward, both in terms of visual appeal, financial support, and consumer benefit. They also want to see more of a "fun factor" in the town with things to do and more recreational offerings, clubs, and amenities such as the walking trail expansion. A family oriented place, the community would like to see more outdoor entertainment and movie nights to come together, as well as greater beautification of the town, so that when they do come out, they have an aesthetically pleasing environment that is safe, clean and inviting. They are also welcoming to guests, and wish for the town to let others know about their town and its offerings through social media and perhaps a new mobile application for smart devices. They would like to see these improvements financed through grants, tax and related incentives, and the business community. They are also open to private donations, public/private partnerships and other voluntary initiatives, but prefer not to institute additional service fees passed on to the consumer.

In terms of variances among different respondent groups, the results show some significant differences. This is particularly evident among different age groups and by race. Younger people (< age 44 years) are more likely to focus on the city's low cost of living as a reason to choose the area as a place to live. They also are attracted to more progressive incentives

such as a Main Street Challenge over a more traditional approach such as the development of speculative buildings. Younger respondents are also more tuned into fun ways to attract business such as “First Fridays” events, a “buy local” campaign, and a mobile app. Older respondents (65 and older), on the other hand, are more interested in quality of life factors as a reason to live in town, and like conventional activities and amenities such as local parks, farmers’ markets, and a welcome center for their town. African Americans also showed differences in their preferences. They would like to see more pop-up and one-stop shops in the community. They also prefer the more traditional means of communication about events such as through promotional brochures and shopping guides, and enjoy community parks and gardens to make the city a more attractive place to live and work.

The primary finding of this study is that the public places positive value on both traditional economic interventions and quality of life components (Hypothesis #1). The strongest mean responses were given to health and wellness strategies and community engagement strategies. The involvement of government was also identified as key to economic and community vitality (Hypothesis #2) and they play an important role in assuring transparency and accountability (Hypothesis #4). Another priority was the offering of incentives, which was highly rated by survey respondents on a variety of questions (Hypothesis #3). In addition, if visual improvement strategies are taken as a whole, the strategy of aesthetics and beautification becomes a major priority overall. The need to help improve the overall look and appearance of the town stood out across multiple questions and response categories, directly benefiting both the local residents and the town at large, reinforcing the continued importance of place-based strategies that focus on the overall appearance of the community. Moreover, a tool such as this community survey can be applied to assess if these are common challenges and opportunities for multiple communities seeking revitalization (Hypothesis #5).

## Key Informant Interviews

### Results

A total of nine interviews were conducted between March 17 and April 25, 2017. The response rate was 90 percent with only the chair of the Council not responding. Overall, the interviews with statewide and regional coordinators from across the country were scheduled and conducted over a span of eight weeks. The interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours and offered insights into how the program has been operationalized throughout the country.

### *Demographics and Context*

The respondents represented nine different states including four from the Midwest: Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin; three from the South: Florida, Kentucky, and South Carolina; one from the West Coast: California; and one from the Northeast: Pennsylvania. (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). In addition to coming from different regions across the U.S., the respondents embodied perspectives from a variety of five model program designs. For example, in Florida, the coordinator represented a “City Managed Model” which has been a historically sound approach that is regaining momentum, as more cities become regional metropolitan centers with smaller city centers serving as satellite communities. The second model employed is the “Self-Help Statewide Model” that provides technical assistance and guidance, but offers no direct financial support. This model is employed in Kentucky and South Carolina. The third model is the “Nonprofit Statewide Board or Economic Development Corporation.” This model is evidenced in California, Missouri and Wisconsin, and these states provide direct financial assistance to aid targeted communities. For example, in FY2011-12, Wisconsin’s statewide Main Street program awarded more than \$80 million in grants to help support local programs (Swenson, 2013, p.3). The fourth model is the “Public Statewide Model” and is most evident in Iowa. It allocates between \$1-3 million annually through the Iowa Downtown Resource Center.

On the other hand, Michigan utilizes a public statewide model, but directly offers only technical assistance and education. However, members will receive additional consideration for grants from other economic development grant programs that the state offers. Finally, there are the “Hybrid Models.” For example, in Pennsylvania, the coordinating Main Street program is led by a nonprofit, but it contracts with the state’s Department of Community and Economic Development for the provision of outreach, technical assistance and skill-building services (see Table 4.21.).

**Table 4.21.** Key Informants - State and Regional Program Model Types

City Managed	Self-Help	NP or EDC	Public	Hybrid
Florida	Kentucky South Carolina	California Missouri Wisconsin	Iowa Michigan	Pennsylvania

The demographic profile of the key informant participants is fairly homogeneous along racial and ethnic lines, but is more diverse by gender and professional work experience. Five of the respondents were female and four male, showing a split of a slightly higher female representation (55.6%). The level of experience showed greater diversity. Three had between 10-14 years of experience with the Main Street program or economic development in general, four reported 20-24 years of experience, and two had 25 years or more of practice in the field. Their ages ranged from the mid thirties to the high sixties to seventies. The largest share (55.6%), however, were in the 55-64 age range, once again reflecting their extensive years of program experience (see Table 4.22.).

**Table 4.22.** Key Informants - Age Distribution

35-44	%	45-54	%	55-64	%	65-74	%
2	22.2%	1	11.1%	5	55.6%	1	11.1%



Several of the key informants had previously managed a local Main Street program or worked in economic development for a local authority, building improvement district (BID), a business association, or had been actively engaged in historic preservation activities.

### *General Leadership*

The first several questions inquired about general leadership factors pertaining to the Main Street Program. Many respondents focused on the leadership roles of the Main Street Manager or Executive Director. Others focused on the role of board members, while still others considered both. Whatever direction they took, all interviewees indicated that leadership is “a really big deal” or “‘extremely’ or ‘absolutely’ important.” Not one considered it inconsequential to the program’s success.

Having said this, several of the respondents outlined some of the most salient traits to look for in a local manager. These include: being proactive, strong, secure in one’s beliefs, having an entrepreneurial spirit, and exhibiting creativity. As one participant noted, “The role of leadership begins with the Executive Director[s]. They drive the boat most of the time. A lot of leadership falls back on them.” He/she must be able to recruit volunteers, engage citizens, and help “take the reigns” for setting goals and walking the board and other volunteers towards and through to implementation. While not always doing the work, the manager must be able to mobilize others to do it. They also must have the skillset or the willingness to develop an expertise in business retention and recruitment, and not rely solely on events and other engagement activities that may not go far enough to achieve the desired ends.

Some of the traits to avoid in an executive are to be so outgoing that he/she is off-putting or abrasive. Others may be so task-oriented that they get a lot done, but make others angry along the way; or so shy, they sit in the office all day. The right balance is needed so others feel a part, but the work gets done.

Interviewees consider board members and local government leaders as very instrumental to the success of a Main Street revitalization effort. It takes collective leadership, different personalities, with all groups working together. Some key attributes include volunteers with fresh ideas, a “get ‘er done” attitude, access to resources, and community influence. They also must have the ability to mentor others so that when they leave, the mission continues. This training and transition planning creates a team ethic, and assures that a sustainable program will continue.

Some interviewees identified what to avoid, such as leaders that are “too controlling” as if they were running a business, and calling all the shots. Others can exert “too little control,” which can lead to floundering. Others are stretched too thin and are unable to commit the necessary time, or have personality conflicts with other volunteers. Nonetheless, properly harnessed, leaders can identify what can be done, become a resource for funding, and serve as volunteers for specific economic development projects, leading to transformation of the local economy. Interviewees noted that it helps if they are well liked, respected, and able to help engage the community as a whole, which will in turn, lead to the program gaining the public’s respect. Seeing a major business leader come out to a grand opening wearing a Main Street polo shirt and offering congratulations means a great deal to a new business owner. It is called “the personal touch effect.”

A third type of leader that can have a significant impact is the press. Similarly, good press is valuable in shaping public opinion, and local media representatives can be highly responsive when a story is ready made for them with a written narrative and action photos of the scene or event.

Private business leaders, program staff, the media, and local citizenry are all key constituency groups from which to tap for leadership of local revitalization efforts. However, the public sector can, and often is, another important source of leadership. Government leaders and

other officials are also particularly instrumental to the future success of any economic development initiative. In reality, though, the interviewees stated that government officials could either be supportive, or “program killers.” They can hinder the revitalization efforts significantly, if they are not supportive. Thus, it is important to engage a strong mix of all groups to be effective.

A unifying theme across all types of leaders was that of “creating a vision” and “looking to the future.” One participant called this “tail-end seeing,” achieved through setting realistic goals and then seeing if they are met. This activity involves assessing how the community is growing, exploring both large and small industry opportunities, and creating a concrete vision for where they want to lead the program. As one interviewee observed, the leadership cannot sweat the small stuff, but needs to be willing and interested in looking at the big picture. People who care about the color of the banner or the day of the Pumpkin Festival need to be engaged outside of a leadership role. This ability to step back and take an overall perspective, is a fundamental attribute of a leader.

Another major theme is to be a strong communicator. Social media and local media are important platforms, but informal spokespersons, like neighborhood or block leaders, are also critical to enlist support. However, when it comes to executive leadership, “personality comes first.” It takes leaders who can make a connection with others, have a warm and upbeat demeanor, a willingness to listen to others, and the ability to build trust that will help motivate others.

So what are the factors of successful leadership to revitalization efforts of Main Street programs? The interviewees laid out several key factors for consideration. The first is “buy-in.” Many respondents noted that achieving buy-in helps raise the level of commitment to the neighborhood or commercial area. No matter if it is a rural community or an urban neighborhood,

local buy-in is key to programmatic success. The second factor is “building trust.” Local communities are more likely to embrace change if they trust those in leadership positions. For example, when a street is being converted from a four-lane road, back to two lanes, oftentimes to support bike lanes or reduce traffic speed, it takes some resiliency for local merchants to accept this modification. They must overcome the fear of loss that the lane reduction will bring in terms of daily traffic or parking. They need to trust that it will slow the traffic, encourage people to stop, and bring in new foot traffic to their stores. This leads to the third success factor: “embracing change.” It is almost a grief process that longer-term residents need to go through as newer ones come in, altering the local culture and bringing new tastes and consumer preferences. In Iowa, they call them the “New Iowans,” bringing with them a climate of innovation, different resources, new leadership, and opportunities for the future. As one respondent noted, “Once people embrace that change, then you can build buy-in,” which is the most important factor to achieving sustainable revitalization.

So what is this “buy-in” that is so essential? Interviewees describe it as a threefold process: 1) being on the same page, 2) sharing the same vision, and 3) agreeing to work together toward it. Once the change is embraced, and the community trusts the leadership to help effect that change, the team can work on pursuing that shared vision. It cannot be just the staff and board’s ideas; the community needs a sense of ownership as well. Yet, that in and of itself is not enough. The resources and entrepreneurial spirit will need to kick into gear to bring that vision to life.

One respondent listed six (6) steps for success: (1) build trust to begin; (2) embrace change; (3) encourage learning and innovation; (4) achieve buy-in from all relevant parties; (5) secure the resources necessary; and (6) modeling ethical behavior. Trust can be built over time through small successes. However, the interviewees see the community’s ability to embrace

change as the most difficult hurdle to overcome, but critical to gaining local buy-in. This ability to embrace change should further include the willingness to embrace the changing nature of retail and its demographics as well as the overall look and feel of the community. Some also recognize that innovation is important to achieving the necessary change and that younger age groups are the most viable target market. Participants will need to learn about emerging markets and how to attract them. The younger population is also more likely to be attracted to new start-ups, and most willing to assume risk. Yet, how will these new business ventures be financed? One interviewee states, “It goes right to the climate of innovation” and can lead to creating live/work spaces, incubators, career success, and place making which is important to 20-30 year olds. However, they will need incentives and sound business plans to help bring their creative ideas to market.

Another practical recommendation was to use a phased approach. Incentives such as façade and sign grants can offer incremental assistance to help launch new businesses. These incentives might just be the nudge that is needed to help get the process underway. Concurrently, while property owners often want to see immediate results, they need to acknowledge that the declining neighborhood did not get there overnight. Similarly, restoration takes time, and a phased in approach can help facilitate others to engage in working toward the desired end result. Finally, when modeling ethical behavior, leaders demonstrate that they can be trusted and will treat those they engage with fairly and equitably, possibly leading to more partnerships in the future.

Next, the interviewees were asked about their views pertaining to rural communities. In some respects, quick wins are more visible and achievable according to some respondents. “Pulling weeds and hosting an event” can be a real game changer in a rural community, posited one key informant. It can help build community pride in a town of 1,500 to 3,000, creating a visible change and impact.

Another interviewee notes that mobilizers need to get past the desire to have 100% of the population on board. While some went so far as to say that community involvement is #1 in rural communities, it does not need to be the entire community that is significantly engaged, but a substantial number. In fact, one key informant pointed out that representation is actually higher in smaller communities. This “empowerment factor” leads to community pride. For example, in a city of 100,000 residents 500 involved people represents only .5% of the population; but in a town of less than 5,000, it is 10% of the population. Statistically speaking then, the leadership team in rural areas represents its community more closely. Having a small, effective “leadership network” filled with action- oriented individuals can be very powerful in a small town, if strategically leveraged and showcased to the community at large.

Visitors also need a reason to come to the smaller town, often referred to as “feet on the street.” In Iowa, they like to think of it as a typical day. At 8am, can a person grab a cup of coffee? From 9am-5pm, can a visitor shop and dine? Then in the evening, from 6pm-10pm, are there things for visitors to do such as biking, entertainment, or walking? These things make the rural downtown attractive for a new business, or downtown residential living.

Yet, smaller towns have limited resources. Having a “can do attitude” can help, used in combination with a strong “vision.” The creation of a shared development strategy is essential, coupled with a plan in place that builds on existing assets. Adoption of a written plan is a critical milestone for a community; it lays out the assets of the area and offers direction on how to build development policies that will help them create a unique approach upon which they can shape their future (Cleave, Arku & Chatwin, 2017). In doing so, rural areas can leverage their existing resources and build from there. As one interviewee noted, they need to identify “lighter, quicker, and cheaper” activities in the rural South. Many will barter: “you do this for me, I will do this for you.” For example, if a business owner spray paints the exposed sun bleached barrels in front of

the store (beautification), then the Main Street program will give free advertisement for the hardware store next week on its Facebook Page.

The second major challenge for rural communities is the importance of local public officials. Elections can alter the course of revitalization, making or breaking a lot of programs. To breach the success barrier, interviewees advocate that small towns have a plan, utilize an incremental approach, stick to it, build excitement, and apply a self-help mentality. The catalyst can range from a local champion to restore an old depot, to the Main Street manager taking initiative, or the local mayor helping to get the ball rolling. In addition, while many place a premium on creating a well-planned, laid out vision that is market-based and asset-driven, others underscore the importance of time spent on building a strong team. According to interviewees, leaders must develop the requisite skills, have a vision for what can be accomplished, and implement the community and economic development plan in order to achieve long-term success.

#### *Public Leadership*

When discussing views on leadership in a general sense, the key informants exhibit a high level of consistency. While their stories and areas of emphases vary, they nearly uniformly focus on the importance of a strong leadership team, a well-laid out vision, and public participation. For those with more extensive experience, the importance of perseverance and implementation are added to extend the long-term impact. When discussing public leadership, in particular, however, the level of consensus fades somewhat into an “it depends” situation. Some states address this up front, by requiring local governments to have a financial stake in the Main Street program, and thereby a fiscal interest in its success (e.g., Iowa, South Carolina, Missouri). In one of the larger states, the view of government is that it can be “obstructionist or visionary” depending on the leadership in office at the time.

In some states, there is ambivalence about whether the mayor or a governmental manager should have a formal relationship with the Main Street program by serving on its board of directors. One interviewee expressed concern that the elected official may try to block a streetscape design if he/she does not favor it. Alternatively, a credibility issue could emerge and reflect on the program. As one respondent put it, on a scale of 1-10, “I would put it [local government involvement] up at a 9 or 10” in the beginning, during the planning and visioning phase. However, he considered it as better if they are at “arm’s length” during implementation, placing them at a 4 then. Still others suggested limited involvement. One interviewee noted, “Government does well on design, but then they stop. [You] can’t have just a one-legged stool. [We] need business recruitment.” She would put the role of government as an 8-9, but also need them to be open, flexible, and active participants in the economic development process. As another suggested, “A partnership provides the best balance.” Still another suggested, “Government needs to be a 10 when we talk about involvement. Unless you have a really strong nonprofit, they have the resources to make change happen” especially in small rural communities. In one Midwestern state with a variety of community sizes, the interviewee suggests: “It really depends on the community. If no one else is stepping up, then government could start the conversation.” The problem is, that they could also step in the way. Participation is critical as they can help get things done, but also hinder the situation. Another interviewee gave government a 7, identifying that the public sector needs to deal with zoning, taxes, and infrastructure improvements. They were not seen as driving the economic development effort in the town, however. Overall, scores ranged from 7 to 10, sometimes waning during the implementation period; whereas others saw government has having a key role in implementation due to its important role in developing a strong infrastructure and tax system.



Referring to Stiglitz, 2002, the issue of public accountability and an informed citizenry was considered as a critical component to the wellbeing of a national democracy. The interviewees were also asked about public engagement and consensus building and their importance to economic and community development. The interviewees took an interesting turn in their responses to these issues. Some continued to espouse the notion of perseverance by not giving up, and showcasing their achievements in small chunks rather than a large “dump” at the annual meeting, reminiscent of the incremental approach. Others took on a more process-oriented response or a step-by-step approach. As one respondent put it, “Main Street is often good at getting things done, but not always good at relationship building; and modest too, not always tooting its horn. A circular pattern needs to happen.”

In effect, several interviewees stated that there needs to be a feedback loop of accountability back to the public. This could be done via a newsletter, a booklet, updates on the website, or posts on Facebook to help keep the public informed and engaged. There can also be “unexpected communication” using informal channels, helping to create robust relationships. Yet, local government also needs to be transparent. Plans that have been enacted need to be updated and reported on as to the progress being made. This creates a sense of openness (Knight Foundation, 2010). One respondent even suggested that the program focus on shorter term outcomes as espoused by Strategic Doing (Morrison, 2013) and through “Lean Planning,” which does away with the 3-5 year strategic plan approach and employs a 30 day planning horizon for action planning, progress assessment, and identification of the steps for the next 30 days (Berry, 2015, pp. 27, 112). As one interviewee notes, this keeps their plans fresh, flexible and current. Another benefit of public accountability is that you can use it as an opportunity for volunteer recruitment. Not only does it help win public buy-in, it can also help recruit new people previously disenfranchised. Moreover, as technology changes, younger, tech savvy people need

to be engaged in a meaningful way so that there are a diversity of skillsets that can be leveraged to reach the most people, utilizing a variety of communication channels. Regularly scheduled meetings may no longer work, so the program must be alert and flexible as to the most effective means for recruitment, recognition and engagement of the public.

When specifically asked about how to achieve public accountability and transparency, many responded that communication is key to conveying that “We are all in this together.” Another interviewee states, “If the process is transparent, it is good for both the city and the community’s reputation.” Alternatively, if the process is not open, it can make the decision making feel sneaky and underhanded. Thus, public participation is highly important because it helps build trust, a bond, and a partnership that allows the community to be involved and share in the ownership of the changes taking place. Moreover, when there is collective responsibility and mutual benefits are shared, it seems natural to celebrate the success stories, and also discuss the lessons learned, when something doesn’t work. As one interviewee notes, the nonprofit model is ideally suited for this purpose. Whereas no one is likely to want to admit government failure, nonprofits have more freedom to innovate and add to new knowledge through demonstration programs and short-term initiatives. By being open and transparent, they can share information with other innovators about what works and what does not, so that they can add value to other community efforts in their network.

As an organizing framework, it is useful to consider some of the salient models of political theory and their applications to the Main Street model. Participants were presented with four (4) models of governmental policymaking, including the Principal/Agent Theory; Policy Network Model; Multiple Streams Theory; and Systems Theory. Brief definitions of each were included in the preview materials for their consideration and are summarized as follows:

- 1) Principal/Agent Theory: The government leaders make decisions and local business, community volunteers and staff implement their public policy directives. The closer the agent is to the principal, the more influential the principal is in achieving his/her policy agenda. (Mitnick, 2006)
- 2) Advocacy Coalition Framework: Different subsystem networks convene to influence government officials and advance their economic development agendas. Leaders have tightly held belief systems that guide their policy-making decisions. (Sabatier, 2007)
- 3) Multiple Streams Theory: The problem, solution and political streams operate independently, but must come together to effectuate change. Generally, a “focusing event” is needed to coalesce these three streams. (Kingdon, 2011)
- 4) Systems Theory: Social systems are patterned activities of a number of individuals in a given environment. They rely on feedback, and create a variety of paths to the same goal (“equifinality”). A change in one aspect of the system affects other parts of the system. This occurs because the system is “open” with no clear boundaries. (Katz and Kahn, 1966).

These theories, while not all-inclusive, serve to characterize some of the essential elements of Stiglitz’s theory of economic development discussed earlier, and they take the policy framework created by Anderson (1975) to a new level. This earlier framework divided the policy process into a series of stages from agenda setting to policy formulation, implementation, and on through to evaluation. However, it neglects the interaction that occurs between the states, the underlying drivers, and the complexity of the process and actors involved. As such, several new models emerged in the 1980s and 1990s and beyond that have succeeded in developing greater insight into how public policy change occurs by focusing on agenda setting, key stakeholders, and external factors that can influence the process (Sabatier, 2007). These selected theories, coupled

with organizational change using the systems concept (Katz and Kahn, 1966), form the basis for discussion.

Respondents seemed to appreciate the opportunity to share their observations, applying this “big picture” framework. Table 4.23. lays out their general first and second preferences.

**Table 4.23.** Key Informants - Policy Change Models

Model Type 1: Principal Agent	Model Type 2: Advocacy Coalition	Model Type 3: Multiple Streams	Model Type 4: Systems Theory	Other: Need them all
Missouri (1)	California (1) Pennsylvania (1) So. Carolina (2)	Florida (1) Iowa (1) Michigan (1) So. Carolina (1) California (2) Kentucky (2)	Wisconsin (1) Iowa (2)	Kentucky (1)

Blue = Nonprofits/EDC; Green = Public; and Black = City Managed/Self-Help/Hybrid.

The most favored policy change model was Kingdon’s Multiple Streams. In Kingdon’s theory, it takes multiple groups to come together to reach a consensus on a solution to an identified problem. This political stream underscores the belief that all stakeholders should be at the table, said one participant. For example, at the national level, the National Main Street Center was considering the option of becoming a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. All the participants from across the country wanted to know how it would affect them and their programs. These were intense growing pains, and moving forward would be difficult with multiple interests. The move itself was also a “focusing event,” and sometimes simply bringing people together, is an event, building the necessary political will. Another participant referred back to the “catalyst phase” when a Main Street program first starts out. This initial start is often characterized by a focusing event such as a fire downtown, or something positive, such as a new development project. Other events might include a flood or a hurricane as a rallying cry, but each see the presence of some type of focusing event as key 90-95% of the

time. Another noted that communities are often “waiting for a focusing event.” They will often flounder a bit in the beginning, because everyone wants to be a great place to live, work and play. What will make them special? Oftentimes, it takes a major building renovation or rehabilitation effort that forces all of the people to become engaged. Finally, another interviewee took a more practical outlook. Under the Multiple Streams theory, the approach encourages people to define a problem in a strategic plan (visioning session, master plan, or a charrette) and then assists the group in coming to a joint solution stated multiple ways. This planning process becomes the focusing event, and can lead to an effective means for identifying and working on a common goal to effectuate revitalization.

The second most-preferred policy change model is the Advocacy Coalition Framework. One respondent expressed the view that this model has the most collaborative design and “we need to be true to that.” The interviewee felt that a plan should be developed from the different sub-systems. This approach is underscored by another stating “This theory has well-defined constituencies and relates to the general assembly with specialists.” In practice, the interviewees observed many different subsystem networks that meet fairly regularly to advance their agendas. A concern is that the Advocacy Coalition Framework approach could result in too many silos, and therefore it is difficult to achieve unified change or obtain the funding needed for measurable change to occur due to competition for scarce resources.

Systems Theory was a distant third choice overall. One interviewee notes that the total ecosystem with all the subsystems is relevant. She observes, “Government is often very good at day to day operations, but misses its opportunity to thrive.” A Main Street program can serve as that “creative force” that is an injection to the community (system) and that garners all the people together for change. Another affirmed a belief in complex systems and that change takes place within them. For example, within downtowns there are various sizes, spaces, and businesses.

Some are new, whereas others are long-time establishments. If a single business leaves, there may not be a need to refill it as before, but the town could introduce something new instead, and the nature of the downtown may not change significantly. On the other hand, if a strip center is anchored by a Walmart store, and it closes, then all the other satellite stores may leave with it. If forced to grow outside the system, the necessary support could be lost.

One interviewee selected the Principal Agent Theory as the most relevant to how the system is currently constructed. Nonetheless, in his state, some local government leaders do encourage local public involvement. It helps when the leadership values the opinion of the people under this type of model. While the elected officials reserve the right to make the final decisions, they concomitantly exhibit a culture of learning and listening. They engage in research through focus groups, best practice programs, and other means for informed decision-making. Viewed by another state interviewee, the use of the Principal Agent model is considered too “top down.” Social activists and community mobilizers are forced to choose their battles carefully when this model is in evidence.

Finally, one interviewee voiced the need for all of the policy models. The best approach is to use “a little bit of all of those at some time or another.” Why? The interviewee notes that government leaders do not make all the decisions, but nor can the public be consulted on all decisions. Thus, the practitioner may need to employ all models as appropriate to the situation. Interviewees also encourage program leaders to engage the young, and not rely solely on traditional channels of leadership. Boards, for example, can reach out to college students or young professionals on issues such as landfills where they need to have their voices heard.

### *Quality of Life*

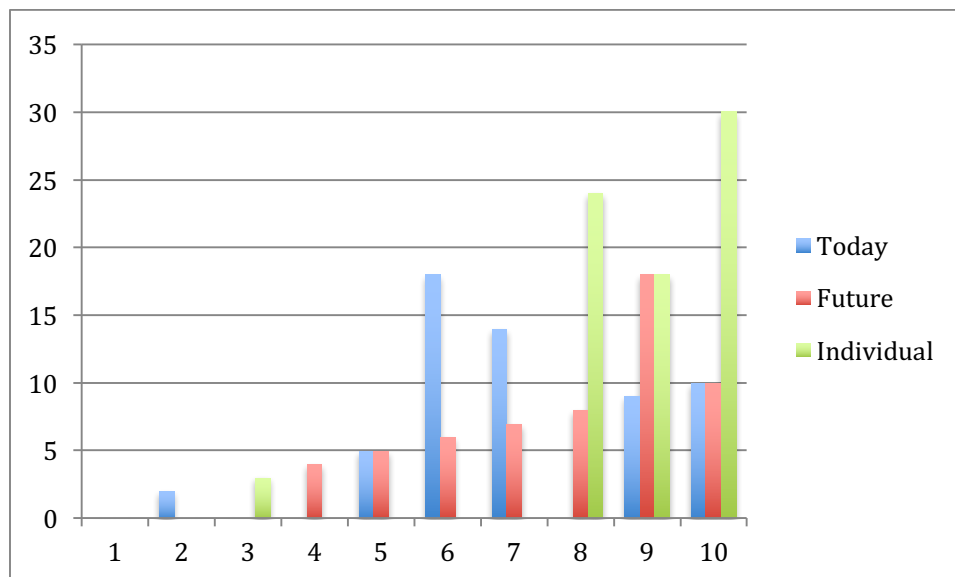
Participants were next invited to imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for the respondent

and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for respondent and his/her community. The respondents were then asked, “On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel your community stands at this time, assuming that the higher the step the better you feel about your community, and the lower the step the worse you feel about it? Which step comes closest to the way you (personally) feel? (See Table 4.24. and Figure 4.1.).

**Table 4.24.** Key Informants - Quality of Life Ladder Average Scores

Response Category	N	Score Range	Average Score
Community Today	9	2-10	6.44
Community in Future	8	4-10	7.25
Key Informant / Individual	9	3-10	8.33

**Figure 4.1.** Key Informants – Quality of Life Ladder Scores



In general, the key informants reported a lower quality of life for their Main Street communities than for their own personal quality of life (6.44 versus 8.33 on average). However, they did assert that by most standards, the Main Street communities are expected to improve and move up the scale over the next five years, by approximately one point overall to 7.25 on average.

Part of the reason for some of the lower rankings can be attributed to some significant changes happening at the local level, including both positive and negative factors. One interviewee stated that her community had been a 10, but it lost its program and now things are not attended to; there are safety issues; and the local leadership lacks a passion for the street. Others give a more average score due the wide variation across the state. One interviewee states that there are good opportunities, but not all communities take advantage of them equally. Others are undergoing a significant crisis, such as in Flint, Michigan. This community's challenges are extreme and will take years to move the dial. Another factor is leadership. One interviewee notes, "The reason they rank their communities so high is that there are people on the ground who care so much. Good leadership is out there, and young leaders are coming up through the ranks."

Key local environmental factors also play a part in the rankings. The positive factors include: the built environment, geographic location, streetscapes, cultural amenities such as zoos and parks, as well as access to natural amenities such as lakes and rivers. Another interviewee notes that it is often a state of mind that makes the difference. In Wisconsin they focus on "work to live" rather than "live to work." Free time is very important to residents, and they advance the "Wisconsin Idea" that encourages the community to share their ideas and knowledge with guests to the area, such as information on native plants and fauna.

On a personal level, respondents value their environment as part of their quality of life, but it extends further to personal traits such as health and wellness, job satisfaction, family time, and freedom to travel. Still others enjoy local benefits such as a community driven farmer's market with "farm to table" components as well as access to a variety of activities such as biking, fishing and other lake or beach activities, in conjunction with access to urban amenities such as nightlife, corner stores, and other local amenities.



The anticipated community improvements are seen to occur incrementally over time. Interviewees observe that each community is in a different state: some are just starting out and need to identify and capitalize on opportunities. Others have developed a high quality of life, and need to protect it from the encroachment of further growth in conservation areas or public lands such as forested hunting areas, lakes, and other natural resources. One interviewee suggests that they need to be “designing for the ages” and the Millennials and Baby Boomers, specifically. She asked the question, “How do you make a community hip and young, but also safe, adaptable and comfortable for the more mature set?” The downtowns of tomorrow will need consider “place integration” or how communities can support healthy aging as well as provide venues of interest to young Millennials (Hanlon, Skinner, Joseph, Ryser, & Halseth, 2014). In addition, how will most Main Street programs keep pace with social media platforms gaining ground such as Snapchat, Instagram, and others? In some more mature communities, planning has given way to accelerated growth and needs to return to fundamentals such as assuring quality construction, good schools and educational opportunities, and planned population growth that does not strain the local infrastructure beyond its capacity.

This begs a question about resources. Significant growth and development requires local communities to engage in fundraising and assure there is a tax infusion to support that growth. Main Street programs may also consider forming a local foundation to manage development and put funding away for future investments. Some interviewees cautioned about the responsibilities that come with growth such as litter, trash, and possible public safety issues. These issues are all interrelated and must be carefully considered as growth continues.

In one interviewee’s view, the next major task for Main Street programs is to explore the connection to healthy communities. Those in leadership positions should not become complacent, but should ask themselves, will further change create a sense of place and community? Will it add

to the quality of life? Will it preserve the assets we hold dear? Or, will it threaten the quality of life and health of the community?

Finally, informants were asked to think about how they would measure the success of their communities' efforts. Key measures were identified as laid out in Table 4.25.

**Table 4.25.** Key Informants - Proposed Metrics of Success

Universal Metrics	Specialized Metrics (Examples provided.)
Vacancy rates	Visitor attraction
Population size	Having places to gather
Crime statistics	Community engagement
Market leakage	New housing starts
Job creation	Health rates
Numbers of new businesses	Behavioral rates
Assessed value of the area	Things to do

Collectively, the interviewees stated in some manner that every community needs to establish a business case for its program. A way to approach this is to apply a longitudinal evaluation of the community. These metrics should be robust and capable of consistent application across programs in both urban and rural settings.

Beyond that, each community needs to respond to the question of “What is your vision?” As such, a different set of unique metrics would apply. As one interviewee notes, if you want to be a bedroom community, then new housing starts would be relevant. Another may want to be known for its hospitality, and then specialized metrics concerning visitation apply. Return on Investment (ROI) outcomes relative to goals are important for any community to develop and track over time for their community to demonstrate quantifiable progress. And for rural communities, having activities, things to do, visitor attraction and community engagement activities, are particularly important to draw people and keep people in the area.

Where does leadership fit into the quality of life matrix? One interviewee notes, “Leaders want a better quality of life too; they may just not understand the tools to get there.” Therefore, they need to have a plan, the ability to assess progress, and then the willingness to adjust the plan as needed. Another notes, “Leaders can be visionary, making sure that the community is the best it can be. They need not be just inwardly focused, but need to learn from others.” They also need to avoid being shortsighted, but learn what other places have done and modify to their own community over time. Leaders can then be a catalyst for change and offer an example of how to engage the community, foster high ethical standards, and lift others up to see that change and a higher quality of life is possible to attract and retain the types of residents and visitors they desire.

### *Ideas for Change*

These program leaders and coordinators indicated that change is needed. Many coordinating programs and local programs are operating on a slim budget. Those struggling observe that it is very important to have the resources needed to get the job done. Others note that the contribution of the Main Street program is not always well recognized despite their contribution to the economy. One state coordinator noted that they have contributed \$110 million to the state, but it has not translated into more tools such as financial support to assist local programming. Another limitation is that the local organizations are often stretched for time. They need to feel more empowered and entrust the board for resource development. The program is largely a staff driven model and the board needs to drive more, leading to an “empowered board.” Part of the desired change could also be started at the national level. More innovative people are needed to create a diverse team. At the state level, they need to add “more fabulous and innovative doers and shakers” like in Missouri. Sizes of statewide Main Street program staff vary tremendously from only two to as many as eight, with the number of individually designated programs running from the teens to the 40s, depending on the state.

Several strategies were recommended to help strengthen these programs. One respondent focused on education, stating that while it can be hard to demand more time of overworked executive directors, they must require them to invest more time in their education for economic development, in particular. Similarly, states need to invest in the program. For example in Pennsylvania, the state will provide \$175,000 over a five-year period for managers to use for a façade program, planning, and implementation grants. Still others recommended more stable operational funds and private sector support.

At the leadership level, many interviewees observed that it is important for programs to partner together and avoid turf wars that can impede success. The movement needs to engender a sense of unity, not divisiveness. As one participant stated, “Downtown is everyone’s neighborhood.” All should feel comfortable, and those in charge should do what’s best for everyone. But differences of opinion persist. One interviewee would like the Main Street program to encourage a more European model of development, curbing annexation and foster the need for downtown revitalization. This approach might work in some communities, but could be a major challenge for states like Iowa where there is a lot of land and agricultural resources. Developing a universal platform and building consensus around all issues and strategies may be unrealistic at the national level. Nonetheless, at the community level, a board can build political will toward what is right for its community. In order to do so, just as managers need more training, boards need enhanced capacity building to shepherd these changes and mobilize their communities.

One proactive interviewee recommends that they create at the national level a financing mechanism for providing every Main Street program a recurring revenue stream. For example, a penny a gallon gas or cigarette tax might be applied. This funding approach would generate approximately \$50 million per year for Main Street programs by his estimates. National leadership can also advance diversity and inclusiveness, as well as how to respond to

demographic and technological changes happening nationwide. Another way to “amp it up” is for the national program to offer more instruction to support the training and education of local leaders.

Finally, at the local levels, several interviewees commented that rural communities, in particular, need to set realistic expectations. While one small village of 740 was able to raise \$3 million to rehabilitate a Village Hall, this is not usually the case. Most programs are situated in smaller areas and leadership can help set the tone for reasonable goals. They need to believe in the plan and promote it, while also keeping an open mind and be willing to listen and respect the opposition, but not worry about it. One hundred percent consensus is generally not practical, but a small group can accomplish much together if they are able to connect financial incentives to development and work collectively to achieve the outcomes that they want.

#### Discussion of Key Informant Results

The results from the key informant interviews held with members of the Main Street Leadership Council underscored the importance of leadership as it is experienced across the national, state and local levels. Strong, talented, and visionary leaders are needed at every level, but especially at the local level to engage residents and business leaders. Together, they can set the tone for effective teamwork and help design a roadmap for the future. The executive staff is particularly critical in driving the day-to-day efforts of the Main Street organization, and must have the right personality to establish a wide array of positive working relationships. They must also have the balanced skillset of organizational and technical tools to help orchestrate change and to effect revitalization of the local economy.

Local public officials and agency leaders must also be involved, particularly as they relate to providing the necessary infrastructure, regulatory guidance, financing, and taxing structure for supporting these changes. The business community and local citizens are critical

members to effecting change as well, and their buy-in is critical. However, many informants note that only a small percent of the community will be actively working to implement the desired changes. Even so, a small team of committed leaders can be highly instrumental in taking the necessary steps to bring about change, especially if they are focused and have a strong vision that the community has embraced.

Championing and corralling all of these talents together in one executive director and a governing board can be a challenge, and many programs are seeking the provision of additional resources. Nonetheless, if a collective body comes together with an identified revitalization problem, they should be able to craft a solution that the community embraces, and generate the political will through their commitment and dedication. Working together and harnessing the needed skills both internally and externally, they can create the necessary focus to mobilize the community more broadly. Moreover, their success is more likely to occur if they remain focused on the big picture, pursue incremental change in manageable steps, persevere over time, and remain flexible and adaptable to changes in political, board, and staff leadership.

## Conclusion

The key informant interviews held with members of the Leadership Council provided several insights into shared programmatic challenges and strengths across the country. The in-depth discussions focus particularly on the subject of leadership, and reinforce the importance of leaders who can mobilize these local communities and help guide their redevelopment efforts. Seven thematic findings are summarized below.

*Develop a Leadership Team:* While the team does not need to be large, it should be diverse. Spokespersons can range from elected officials to volunteer board members, the executive director of the Main Street program, to a block leader in a particular neighborhood

undergoing revitalization. The media can also be an effective player in helping to set the agenda and get the word out regarding the work of the Main Street program.

*Take Time to Plan:* Working together, even a small team of committed individuals can create a measurable impact. However, they should carefully assess their community's assets and work with the community members to develop a plan of action. If they commit to the planning process, Main Street leaders will be able to identify the strategies that the community desires and that results in the highest return for the community. Leaders must also be willing to learn from other communities about what did and did not work, sharing best practices and being open to the feedback received.

*Consider the Cost:* The redevelopment activities of small rural communities can range from a bartering arrangement to a multi-million dollar redevelopment project. Communities that begin by working on small-scale projects can begin to build trust and help secure buy-in for future initiatives. Over time, they can build on those early success stories and work towards larger projects that will require significant investments of time and financial resources. Starting with short-term goals, rural communities are also ideally suited to engage in “strategic doing” whereby they pursue low-cost initiatives that are frequently updated, revised, and incrementally financed, fostering a continuous process of learning by doing (Morrison, 2013, pp. 13-20). The financial sources for these projects can include both public and private sector investment, and oftentimes states will provide technical and/or financial resources to assist.

*Public Participation:* All Main Street programs are oriented to foster participation by the public. While some policy change models advance a more limited array of actors, the greatest support is for inclusion of a wide array of subsystems and policy networks to have an active voice in the decision making process. Applying Kingdon's Multiple Streams model, most of the Leadership Council members recognize the presence of a “focusing event” that serves as a

catalyst to mobilize the community to action, working toward a jointly agreed upon policy solution (Kingdon, 2011, p. 94-96). Likewise, an effective, decentralized communications network using the press, social media, and other internet-based programs can help promote more effective participation by a wider audience. Thus, rather than suppressing participation, active citizen engagement is encouraged at multiple levels and through various communication channels, tailored to the lifestyles of the resident population.

*Governmental Role:* While local community members can often work effectively together on small scale projects, most national leaders agree that elected officials are essential to long term revitalization. The mayor and other local leaders, along with statewide officials, can play a powerful role in setting the tone, inspiring others to action, and helping to leverage the resources needed to bring about the necessary change.

*Training and Education:* Volunteers must be equipped to lead and work well with the local leadership. In order to assure their commitment they must learn by doing and begin to experience ownership for the results achieved. This ownership can be achieved through leaders that encourage active volunteer engagement in the process of shaping and adopting policies. This engagement process helps strengthen both social and organizational capital. Executive staff must also be trained. As the scope of work intensifies and the need for economic development expertise grows, it will be important for Main Street programs across the country to offer advanced skills training and education to meet their future needs.

*Measuring Success:* Throughout the interviews, a common theme was to proactively assess the work of the Main Street program, showcase their towns' successes and capitalize on the lessons learned when less than optimal outcomes were achieved. A rich set of standardized measures should be employed across all programs, but individualized measures should also be applied for projects specific to the work of the particular Main Street program and its community.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THEORETICAL, POLICY, AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

#### Theoretical Implications

##### Placemaking Theory

As these cities and others work toward creating a sense of place that will attract visitors and future residents, the emerging field of placemaking theory becomes increasingly relevant. These research findings also suggest that the place-based, people theory advanced by Ladd (1994) and the more recent neoendogenous development theory (Bosworth & Atterton, 2012) shows simple, yet close alignment with the results of the community survey and focus group discussions. Participants strongly support a continued investment in classical approaches to economic development such as beautification, redevelopment of underutilized buildings, business attraction, and the offering of incentives. At the same time, they rated quality of life measures highly, especially for their own future happiness and wellbeing, as well as that of the community. They were especially supportive of building improvements/streetscaping projects, neighborhood revitalization, community events and local contests as well as bicycle and pedestrian trails, farmers markets, recreational features and fitness centers. These all afford opportunities to strengthen the economic potential of the area, while also building social capital in the community. Thus a twofold approach is recommended, one that focuses on physical structural improvements, as well as opportunities for the public to socialize and build a stronger sense of community, using community engagement, health and wellness, and arts and cultural activities to foster these quality of life improvements. It is also important to acknowledge that communities are at different stages of development and their interventions will differ; one size does not fit all, but the stages of development continuum can be a powerful tool for helping to examine the community and determining their future direction.

## Regional and Economic Development Theory

The review of selected regional and economic development theories indicates that these can be useful theories for helping to explain some of the ways that small cities and towns have evolved over time. They can also provide insights into why certain businesses can thrive in smaller communities and why others are located in urban centers or regionally based. The Community Voices research, however, also suggests that a new paradigm may be needed for today's rural economies. In view of the placemaking literature and the ongoing successful application of the Main Street Approach, the golden thread throughout this study reinforces the evolution of theory from a purely place-based approach, or even to a place-based, people approach (Ladd, 1994). Instead, a broader focus is needed that includes all the various aspects of place, but also supports the interactions and relationships that people have with their environment and one another, all shepherded by a leadership team of community officials who welcome a transparent, participatory, and interactive dialogue with residents. In doing so, the community is creating a dynamic environment for people to visit and experience (placemaking), but also leveraging the political role that leadership plays (Pavey, et al., 2007; Sydow, et al., 2011; Morrison, 2013; Marsden, 2016). Their role is instrumental in setting the vision and bringing that vision to life, through a participatory process that builds social capital and creates a robust and welcoming atmosphere for sustainable economic and community development.

### Policy Recommendations

Local governments play an important role in the advancement of community and economic vitality. The community voices survey shows that in the study town preferences for government involvement are quite high. Nearly 70% of the respondents believe government should be somewhat to highly involved, with only 3% against involvement. In the key informant interviews, a similar level of involvement was recommended, ranking a score of 7-10 on a 1-10

point scale. However, some believed that government involvement should diminish over time so as to avoid any future conflicts of interest, and to allow other local leaders to shepherd the projects through to implementation. In the focus group discussions, the role of government was considered pivotal. In communities where the relationship with the local government was strained, there was a clear stalling of forward progression. In one community, the local Main Street program leadership and the town leadership seemed to lack a common vision for the future and clear delineation of roles. As one key informant observed, government officials can either be supportive or “program killers.” Another suggests that a partnership provides the best balance.

Given this partnership ideal, what are the most appropriate roles of government and economic development agencies as they seek to develop policies for community and economic vitality? The community voices research suggests the following recommendations.

#### *Design for the Future*

As the new “Refresh Main Street Approach” advances, it is critically important to assess the community and its market to better understand the existing market conditions, and its future potential, in order to develop viable solutions. Cities must also study emerging consumer markets such as Millennials and new Baby Boom retirees, by assessing their needs and consumer preferences. This market assessment is one of the most important first steps to planning for a community in transition.

#### *Build on Public Sector Strengths*

The public sector needs to address zoning, taxes, traffic flow patterns, and infrastructure improvements. These are critical issues for a town undergoing revitalization. If a city does not take care of its water and sewer as well as other infrastructure needs, it will not be able to attract industry and create new jobs for its community or be able to support new residential growth. As shown in the community survey and focus group discussions, adequate water, sewer, roadways

and other forms of infrastructure improvements are essential elements to buttress the community, and make it more economically viable for business attraction and residential development.

*Support the Local Main Street Leadership*

Help the local Main Street program or other community led group craft a vision for the future and assist in its implementation. Elected officials can assist by attending meetings, serving as champions for community engagement, providing financial support, and offering sound ideas and volunteer support.

*Assure Public Accountability*

When a city, public agency or nonprofit organization is engaged in a revitalization effort, it should incorporate a well-developed accountability system for showcasing its goals, tracking its progress, and reporting out to the community the results of the publicly funded initiatives. This transparency will help build trust and public buy-in for future initiatives and showcases the leadership that city officials are providing. Metrics should be instituted that accurately measure the work that is being pursued and include both input and output measures.

*Assure an Ongoing Participatory Process*

The research findings indicate that the public is well aware of the actions being taken, and is fully capable of participating in an ongoing dialog and priority setting process. With 235 respondents to the Community Voices survey, residents and business leaders of the town of Williamston demonstrated that they are poised to have their voices heard as part of the priority setting process. And while focus groups conducted in the four small rural communities of the Upstate had varying attendance, the business and community leaders who did participate clearly articulated their challenges and opportunities, once again demonstrating a strong interest and capacity for engagement. They also have strong networks and connections that can help facilitate economic revitalization (Engbers & Rubin, 2018). In the future, additional mechanisms should be

employed for active business leader and citizen engagement that includes town hall meetings, citizen surveys, and meetings that offer multiple opportunities for participation and to foster sustainable revitalization efforts. Additional outreach is needed to engage more diverse groups, thereby assuring all stakeholders have the opportunity to have their voices heard and build strong social ties that will help buttress the entire community's future.

### Future Research

In summary, the overall research hypotheses for this study were:

1. *The public places a positive value on both traditional economic interventions and quality of life components. (RQ1)*
2. *Local leadership involvement is essential to economic and community vitality. (RQ2)*
3. *The offering of incentives is an important tool for leadership to employ in facilitating economic and community vitality. (RQ2)*
4. *Transparency in economic development helps support sustainability. (RQ2)*
5. *Rural communities share common challenges that can be addressed through the construction of a logical framework for mobilizing a city seeking revitalization. (RQ3)*

The results from the three original research methods reveal that quality of life factors are important components of any economic revitalization strategy. More than ever before, consumers are seeking a place to live that has a strong sense of place and invites belonging (Vanmeenen, 2013), not just a place of employment. Traditional measures of economic development are not to be forgotten, but can no longer be advanced in isolation or these towns risk securing growth without meaning, leading to social unrest, inequality, and damage to the natural environment (Glaeser, 2011; Stiglitz, 2002). Instead, cities need to progress with a twofold approach that seeks to develop a healthy, active and vibrant community where residents can express themselves

socially, artistically, and through community based activities that allow them to connect with others and the environment in which they live.

In doing so, the government leadership will be perceived to play a significant role in facilitating these changes and actively participating in the revitalization effort. While grants, incentives, private donations, and public/private partnerships are encouraged, local residents are seeking cost-effective solutions that add value to their quality of life at minimal cost to the community. While desirable in the short-term from an individual's economic standpoint, the longer-term gain for the public is to invest in their futures.

Third, there is widespread recognition that incentives are needed to attract the necessary businesses and develop the momentum needed to attract a wide array of desired merchants and investors. Using an incremental approach, the leadership can begin with non-material incentives that can also be meaningful (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992; Bernard, 2005). Professionals, and oftentimes, public employees must shepherd these projects through to completion. They are the most knowledgeable about how cities work, and how to navigate the necessary zoning standards, laws, and procedures that must be followed to revitalize these local communities. As the key informants noted, the executive directors are the most influential in leading the Main Street program to success. As such, it is important to acknowledge that they may have asymmetrical information about the proposed projects and should employ an open-door policy and accountability system to disseminate information and encourage a shared leadership approach. Moreover, these staff leaders can help frame the issues so that the public and formal leaders are able to understand and embrace the proposed changes more readily. This "framing effect" can be a powerful tool for advancing change. Thaler and Sunstein (2009) suggest that this framing strategy can be described as a "nudge" to create a desired change. These nudges can range from placement of a decorative decal on a vacant commercial property, to inviting business leaders to

engage in a formal priority setting process using a preselected set of options. However, at times, a more robust array of incentives may need to be offered, and many of the survey respondents recognized and indicated their support for these types of strategies.

Finally, the introduction of the Longitudinal Mapping diagram was an effective tool for engaging the focus group participants in considering where they are today and where they may logically strategize to move next in their future redevelopment efforts. This tool was enhanced by the participants to include several new components and should be tested among a wider number of communities to assess its suitability for replication among other Main Street programs and communities seeking to foster economic and community development.

As such, future research is needed in a number of areas. There are contributions that could add to the literature on rural and regional development. There are also methodological contributions and limitations from this study that could be further explored.

#### *Contributions to Theory and Knowledge and Future Research*

According to Kingdon (2011), the Multiple Streams Theory explains much of the policy making process at the federal level, but does it apply to the local, rural environment? Much of our study implies that it can. In our focus groups we found that dramatic problems persist in selected small rural communities of the Upstate and that there are multiple policy solutions that could be employed to address the revitalization and redevelopment needs of these communities. Without the political will of the leadership and a cohesive plan of action, however, the evidence suggests that little will be accomplished. It takes an actively engaged leadership team, whether it be in the form of the mayor and town council, a nonprofit organization, or a group of concerned business leaders, to facilitate the political will to champion these changes and mobilize the community to action. More often than not, it also takes a focusing event to capture the attention of the community and give the issue salience. As members of the national leadership council noted

during the key informant interviews, this event can be as major as a hurricane or flood, or it can be a proactive act, such as hosting a redevelopment design charrette or establishing a Main Street program. The key is to capitalize on the event and bring all streams, problems, solutions, and political forces together to work collaboratively on a jointly adopted course of action. This “buy-in” is critical prior to moving forward.

Future research is needed to explore what socio-economic factors would help us better understand these case study communities and which indicators are most meaningful in demonstrating readiness for change. While the Community Voices study explored population growth, market retail leakage, age, racial factors, and education, future researchers may wish to add more robust indicators for the case study profiles such as health disparities, income inequalities, and poverty rates.

Future research could also explore why communities are slow to change and respond to the dynamics that lead to a community’s decline. Along these lines, it is important to consider how to finance these economic and community development initiatives. A high level of support was expressed for government to pursue these activities and take a leadership role, but not a willingness to pay that is commensurate with the level of activity that is desired. Ongoing community revitalization cannot be maintained solely through grants and other short-term financing strategies. This disconnect between the desires of the public for local government entities to spearhead economic development and community vitality initiatives, in contrast to their willingness to pay, creates a serious gap in securing the financial means for effectuating long-term change. The public desires governmental involvement economic and community development, but limited funding in small towns places constraints on the resources available. The Main Street programs also operate on limited budgets with a very small staff, further compounding the pressure to deliver short-term, visible results, rather than focus on the longer-



term strategies that will generate the most lasting benefits. Sustainable change cannot be accomplished without active citizen engagement (Stiglitz, 2002; Hamdi, 2010; Schupbach, 2015; Prakash Kelkar & Spinelli, 2016; Redaelli, 2016; Salzman & Yerace, 2017; Winther, 2017), and thus there is a need to develop a deeper understanding of how to garner the support of the local community. Future research is needed to examine this conundrum and seek to identify how these programs can be properly financed, structured, and implemented with the appropriate public engagement and support so that long-lasting initiatives for economic and community revitalization can be achieved.

Finally, in terms of mobilizing communities in distress, future investigation is needed to explore “why” communities are interested in quality of life interventions, and why it is important to have local leaders involved. The study supports the literature by underscoring the importance of leadership engagement (Cleave, Arku, & Chatwin, 2017), but is limited in that it does not explore fully all the roles that both formal and informal leaders have and why they are important. Moreover, this Community Voices study uncovers, especially through the focus groups and community survey, the unique intersection of quality of life and traditional economic development strategies, but does not explain fully why these two types of activities are important to a community and its overall revitalization.

As indicated by the focus group results and key informant interviews, future research could also define better universal level and community-specific metrics for tracking progress over time that more clearly mirrors the type of interventions that Main Street programs and other economic development organizations are employing. In addition, given the community survey results that rank incentives as one of the most cost-effective and high impact interventions to employ, there needs to be further inquiry to understand the types of incentives offerings that are most beneficial for small, rural cities.

### *Methodological Contributions and Future Research*

The Community Voices survey instrument is a valuable contribution to the literature on community and economic development (Appendix E). This tool was based on eight different community surveys selected from across the country. Taking the most relevant questions from each of these similar tools, the Community Voices instrument was crafted to create a holistic survey that integrates questions on quality of life strategies with questions on conventional economic interventions. It also includes questions that address features that benefit individual residents and the community as a whole, and incorporates an exploration of financing strategies. While this survey tool was pilot-tested in a single community for the Community Voices study, it is standardized to be suitable for use in a variety of communities across the country and can be replicated in other Main Street towns and cities. Further research is needed to determine the reliability of the tool across multiple settings, and explore the valuation of quality of life strategies relative to traditional approaches in other communities.

Another contribution of the Community Voices study is the development of the Longitudinal Mapping of Progress Toward Economic and Community Vitality tool (Appendix I). This framework provides a four-stage progression that small communities seeking revitalization can utilize to map their progress over time. This Longitudinal Mapping tool was tested in the four case study communities and has been revised based on the feedback received from the focus group participants. Future research is needed to test this newly revised instrument on more small cities throughout the state and possibly across the country through the National Main Street Center.

### Overall Conclusion

The Community Voices study has demonstrated that local community residents are highly capable and willing to engage in economic and community revitalization using a holistic

and integrated approach. While most experts in the literature present community and economic development in silos (e.g., focusing on arts and cultural improvements, architectural design, or pure economic development strategies) a large segment of the community members are able to synthesize these strategic endeavors and select the key initiatives that are most meaningful to them and for their communities. In doing so, this research also addresses how this can be accomplished through an open and participatory process, using multiple methods. The research further addresses the importance of incorporating accountability measures to track a community's progress and what local leaders can do to assure open communication channels are maintained. Lastly, the research introduces new methodological instruments and tools that can be applied to help focus these revitalization efforts. There is a true ecology of place, and one size does not fit all. As such, the creation of flexible tools such as the community survey and longitudinal mapping framework, can be applied to help community members select from a broad array of targeted strategic initiatives. This process allows residents and its leadership to generate a roadmap that is meaningful specifically to them and help create a set of amenities and sense of place for their own unique community, that engages all three necessary aspects of revitalization: place, people and politics.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Main Street Transformation Process

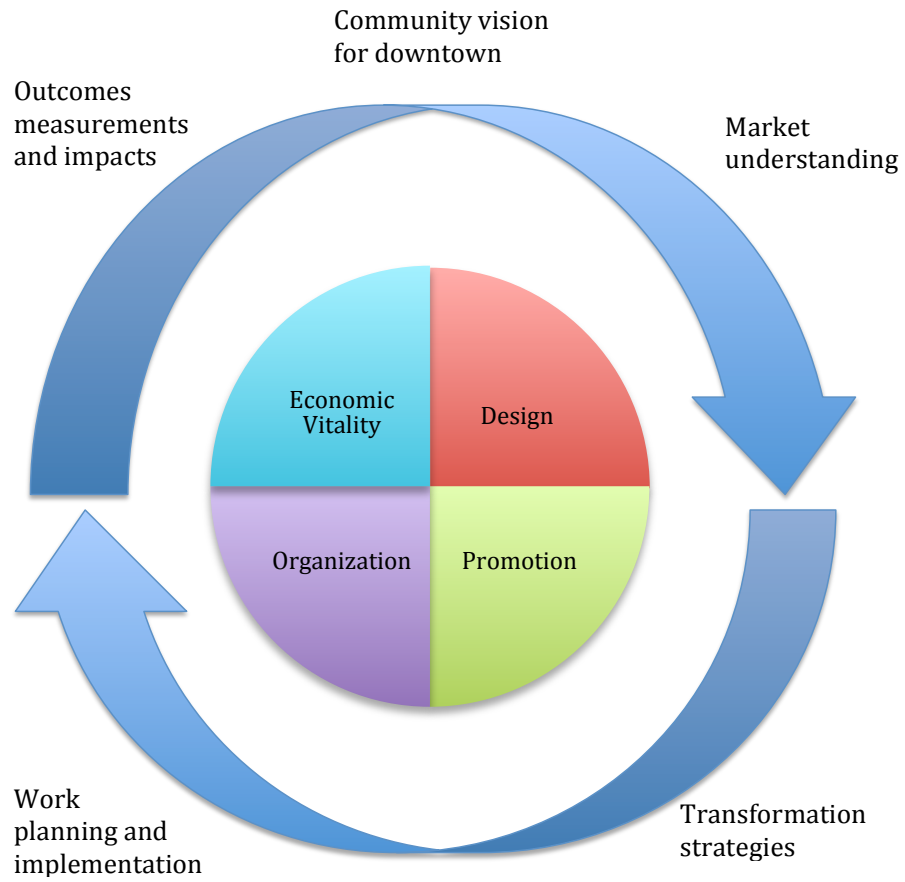


Figure 1. Main Street Approach: Transformation Diagram

Appendix B  
Leadership Traits and Skillsets

<i>Schultz (2004)</i>	<i>Carmela (2017)&amp; Economy (2014)</i>	<i>Ward (2017)</i>	<i>Maxwell (2007)</i>
<i>Traits</i>			
Can do attitude	Accountable	Assertive	Good character
	Aware	Empathetic	Relationship-oriented
	Confident	Extroverted	Knowledgeable
	Decisive	Innovative	Intuitive
	Empathetic	Quality-oriented	Experienced
	Focused		Successful
	Honest		Trustworthy
	Inspirational		Understand timing
<i>Skills</i>			
Develops a vision	Takes initiative		Set priorities
Positive & open	Gets to know team		Establish high goals
Promotes teamwork	Maintains positivity		Achieve buy-in
Set priorities	Willing to forgive		Invest in others
Engages citizens	Builds leaders		Follow a process
Meets challenges			Form team balance
Long term view			Serve others
Shares leadership			Delegate tasks
Develops leaders			Gain momentum

## Appendix C

### Institutional Review Board Application and Exemption



Expedited / Full Board Review Application  
Clemson University (CU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) (**Version 9.7.2012**)  
[Clemson University IRB Website](#)

Office use only Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited <input type="checkbox"/> Full Board  _____ Signature of IRB Chair / Designee	Protocol Number: _____ Expiration date: _____  _____ Date
--	---

**Level of Review** (Questions 13 & 14 determine if the protocol can be expedited): ☒ Expedited    ☐ Full Board

<b>1.</b>	<b>Developmental Approval:</b> If you already have developmental approval for this research study (you should know if you do), please give the IRB protocol number assigned to the study. More information available <a href="#">here</a> .  not applicable
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<b>2.</b>	<b>Research Title:</b>  If different, title used on consent document(s)  If class project, include course number and title	Community Voices: An Exploration of Economic and Community Vitality in Small Rural Towns Community Voices Doctoral Dissertation
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<b>3.</b>	<b>Principal Investigator (PI):</b> The PI must be a member of the Clemson faculty or staff. You cannot be the PI if this is your thesis or dissertation. The PI must have completed IRB-approved human research protections training. Training will be verified by IRB staff before approval is granted. Training instructions available <a href="#">here</a> . CITI training site available <a href="#">here</a> .	
	Name: Lori Dickes, PhD Program Coordinator, Masters Public Administration Program Assistant Director of the South Carolina Water Resources Center	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Staff
	Department: Policy Studies	E-mail: <a href="mailto:lorid@clemson.edu">lorid@clemson.edu</a>
	Campus address: 2023 Barre Hall Clemson University Clemson, SC 29634-0125	Phone: 864-656-7831 Fax: N/A

<b>4.</b>	<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b> Co-Investigators must have completed IRB-approved human research protections training. Training will be verified by IRB staff before approval is granted. Training instructions available <a href="#">here</a> . CITI training site available <a href="#">here</a> .	
	Name: Catherine Mobley, PhD Professor Internship Coordinator Office: Brackett 130B	E-mail: <a href="mailto:CAMOBLE@clemson.edu">CAMOBLE@clemson.edu</a>

Department: Sociology		Phone: 864-656-3815
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty	<input type="checkbox"/> Graduate student	<input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please specify.
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate student	
Name: Sonya R. Albury-Crandall		E-mail: sonya@g.clemson.edu
Department: Policy Studies		Phone: 864-650-7075
<input type="checkbox"/> Faculty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate student	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other. Please specify. Executive
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate student	Director, Envision Williamston, 12 W.
Main Street, Williamston, SC 29697		

5.	<b>Additional Research Team Members:</b> All research team members must have completed IRB-approved human research protections training. Training will be verified by IRB staff before approval is granted. Training instructions available <a href="#">here</a> . CITI training site available <a href="#">here</a> .
	<input type="checkbox"/> List of additional research team members included. Form available <a href="#">here</a> .

6. **Research Team Roles:** Describe the role of each member of the research team (everyone included in Items 3, 4 and 5), indicating which research activities will be carried out by each particular member. Team members may be grouped into categories.

**Description:** Dr. Dickes will oversee the entire research project. She will provide guidance on community recruitment, research methods, focus group facilitation, key informant interviews, community survey design and implementation, and analysis of the research findings. She will also serve as co-facilitator of focus group discussions.

Dr. Mobley will develop, in collaboration with other research team members, the focus group, key informant interview, and survey research design; serve as co-facilitator of focus group discussions; and assist with the summary analysis.

Ms. Crandall, in consultation with Dr. Dickes and Dr. Mobley, will design the research program; select, tailor, and/or develop research tools to address the research questions; work in collaboration with technical advisors on data analysis and presentation; develop the final research study report that will include the following sections: an introduction, theoretical basis, research design and methods, findings, and applications for public policy.

7. **Email Communications:** If you would like one or two of your team members (in addition to the PI) to be copied on all email communications, please list these individuals in the box below.

Name: Catherine Mobley	E-mail: CAMOBLE@clemson.edu
Name: Sonya Crandall	E-mail: sonya@g.clemson.edu

8. **Study Purpose:** Provide a brief description of the purpose of the study. Use lay language and avoid technical terms. IRB members not familiar with the area of research must understand the nature of the research. Upon conclusion of the study, how will you share your results (e.g., academic publication, evaluation report to funder, conference presentation)?

**Description:** "Community Voices: an Exploration of Economic and Community Vitality in Small Rural Towns" seeks to determine the development strategies that the public values, both in terms of economic value but also as a public good and contribution to the overall quality of life in the

community. Economic and community vitality is comprised of several components: financial/economic investment; physical capital; human capital; and social capital. However, many economists and researchers measure economic and social well-being solely on the financial metrics of private investment, job creation, and public resource and infrastructure improvements. Few, if any, study the most valued attributes of the community from the residents' perspective.

This exploratory research lays the foundation for gaining a better understanding of the types of development strategies that the public values and the role of local leadership in facilitating their inclusion. As such, the research is designed to address the three broad concepts of Leadership, Accountability/Transparency, and Community Consensus Building/Participation in the Economic and Community Development Process. These concepts are familiar ones in the international development community (USAID, 2013; OECD, 2007; and SIDA, 2014). The study also relies on participatory theory from Stiglitz (2002) and others as it pertains to sustainable economic development.

The results of the study will be prepared as one or more papers for possible publication in a professional academic journal. One will be submitted for a conference presentation at the 2017 Annual Conference of the National Main Street Center, located in Washington, DC.

**9. Anticipated Dates of Research:**

Anticipated start date (may not be prior to IRB approval; may be "upon IRB approval"): September 1, 2016

Anticipated completion date (Please include time needed for analysis of individually identifiable data): March 31, 2017

**10. Funding Source:** Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Submitted for internal funding  
☐ Internally funded  
☐ Submitted for external funding

Funding source, if applicable (Do not use initials): \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal number (PPN) for the Office of Sponsored Programs: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of PI on Funding Proposal: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Externally funded

Funding source, if applicable (Do not use initials): \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal number (PPN) for the Office of Sponsored Programs: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of PI on Funding Proposal: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Intend to seek funding From whom? \_\_\_\_\_  
☒ Not funded

**11. Support provided by Creative Inquiry Initiative:** ☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, all Creative Inquiry students will be members of the research team, please see item # 5.

**12. Other IRB Approvals:**

Has this research study been presented to any other IRB? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Where? n/a When? n/a

If yes, what was their decision? ☐ Approved ☐ Disapproved ☐ Pending

Please attach a copy of any submissions, approvals, or disapprovals from other IRBs.

- 13. Level of Risk:** Does this project include any procedures that present more than minimal risk to the participants? (A project is considered to present minimal risk if the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations.)  
☐ Yes ☒ No

If your study presents no more than minimal risk to participants, your study may be eligible for expedited review.

- 14. Expedited Review Categories:** The Code of Federal Regulations [45 CFR 46.110] permits research activities in the following seven categories to undergo expedited review. Please check the relevant expedited category / categories.

**The Federal Office of Human Research Protections has made Decision Charts available [here](#) to help in determining whether a particular study may be reviewed using Expedited Review Procedures.**

Categories of Research that May Be Reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through an Expedited Review Procedure	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>1. Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increase the risks or decrease the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review.)</li> <li>b. Research on medical devices for which 1) an investigational device exemption application is not required or 2) the medical device is cleared or approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>2. Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. From healthy, non-pregnant adults, who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml. in an eight week period and collection may not occur more than two times per week; OR</li> <li>b. From other adults and children, considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml. or 3 ml. per kg. in an eight-week period, and collection may not occur more than two times per week.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>3. Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by non-invasive means.</p> <p><u>Examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner;</li> <li>b. deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates need for extraction;</li> <li>c. permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates need for extraction;</li> <li>d. excreta and external secretions (including sweat);</li> <li>e. uncannulated saliva collected either in an unstimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gum base or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue;</li> <li>f. placenta removed at delivery;</li> <li>g. amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor;</li> <li>h. supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques;</li> <li>i. mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings;</li> </ul>

	j. sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>4. Collection of data through non-invasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications.)</p> <p><u>Examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy;</li> <li>b. weighing or testing sensory acuity;</li> <li>c. magnetic resonance imaging;</li> <li>d. electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, Doppler blood flow and echocardiography,</li> <li>e. moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing when appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnoses).
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7. Research on individual or group characteristics, behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior), or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

**15. Study Sample:** (Groups specifically targeted for study)

Describe the participants you plan to recruit and the criteria used in the selection process. Indicate if there are any special inclusion or exclusion criteria.

**Description:**

The focus group and survey research will be conducted in four (4) rural communities in the Upstate of South Carolina that are undergoing economic development and revitalization as part of the national Main Street program. This research will address important concepts such as economic return on investment, livable spaces, social engagement, health and wellness, and the role of incentives in creating positive economic and community-level quality of life impacts. To be eligible the communities must meet the following criteria: (1) Be a Main Street program or a mid-level (at least 3 projects undertaken) economic development community; (2) have a population size of 5,000 residents or less; (3) Have available an email/address data base, such as a water/sewer mailing and phone number contact log; and (4) inclusion of geographic political wards. The communities will be similar in size, composition, and general location/topography to reduce statistical interactions due to demographic, locational bias, natural features (e.g. coastal region), or other geographic factors.

The types of participants that will be recruited include: adult community residents, business owners, property owners, public officials, community leaders, and workers in the selected towns. Visitors and prospective

business owners may also participate in the qualitative portion of the study, but will have relatively minor representation.

The key informant interviews will be conducted with members of the National Main Street Coordinators Executive Committee. The focus is on leadership as it pertains to public and private sector participation in achieving sustainable economic development and community vitality, and the enhancement of overall quality of life within the community, applying the Quality of Life/Happiness Ladder developed by The Gallup Poll, Inc. as cited in Knight Foundation – Communities Project 2010. This national perspective on leadership issues will serve to complement the local case study findings. See: [http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-center/main-street-coordinators.html#.V21y\\_WNqNBs](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-center/main-street-coordinators.html#.V21y_WNqNBs)

Focus group and survey descriptors:

Age range of participants: 18 years of age or older

Projected number of participants: 800

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employees  | <input type="checkbox"/> Students  | <input type="checkbox"/> Minors (under 18 in SC, may differ elsewhere) <sup>1,2</sup> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant women <sup>1</sup>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Fetuses / neonates <sup>1,2</sup>               | <input type="checkbox"/> Educationally / economically disadvantaged <sup>1</sup>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minors who are wards of the state, or any other agency, institution, or entity <sup>1,2</sup>                | <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals who are incarcerated <sup>1,3</sup> | <input type="checkbox"/> Persons incompetent to give valid consent <sup>1</sup>       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other—specify: <u>Residents, business owners, property owners, elected officials, and workers</u> |  | <input type="checkbox"/> military personnel   |

<sup>1</sup> State necessity for using this type of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup> Please note that research involving children (minors) requires submission of a Child Research Addendum. Further information about this addendum is given at the end of this application.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that research involving prisoners (incarcerated individuals) requires submission of a Prisoner Research Addendum. Further information about this addendum is given at the end of this application.

#### 16. Study Locations:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clemson University                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other University / College _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School System / Individual Schools _____ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other – specify <u>Municipalities of Laurens, Pickens, Williamston, and Woodruff, SC</u> |

You may need to obtain permission if participants will be recruited or data will be obtained through schools, employers, or community organizations. Are you required to obtain permission to gain access to people or to access data that are not publicly available? If yes, provide a research site letter from a person authorized to give you access to the participants or to the data. Guidance regarding Research Site Letters is available [here](#).

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research Site Letter(s) not required.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research Site Letter(s) attached.  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research Site Letter(s) pending and will be provided when obtained. |

#### 17. Recruitment Method:

Describe how research participants will be recruited in the study. How will you identify potential participants? How will you contact them? **Attach a copy of any material you will use to recruit participants (e.g., advertisements, flyers, telephone scripts, verbal recruitment, cover letters, or follow-up reminders).**

**Description:** Three (3) main types of participant recruitment will take place for this research study. One is for the qualitative component, which will include three (3) Community Voices (CV) Focus Group discussions, one (1) in each town. The second recruitment process is for the Community Voices (CV) Survey that will encompass the quantitative analysis. The third is personal invitations to participate in the Key Informant Interviews.

Participants will be invited from each Main Street Community to participate in the CV Focus Group discussions. Elected officials, local merchants, and/or local church leaders will be contacted to host and assist with the recruitment of residents to participate in discussions covering four (4) domains: their Town's strengths and weaknesses; Their Town's progress toward economic and community vitality; the role of local leadership and public accountability; and their quality of life. Participants will be invited to participate via advertisements on the Town websites; flyers distribution; and verbal recruitment.

For the CV Survey, participants will be selected utilizing a stratified, random sampling method by Town ward that is proportional, based on their representation within the population for that community. Respondents will be randomly selected and contacted by email and telephone to participate in the online survey. Targeted response rates will be set for each ward. If the rate of those declining to participate falls below the required level, then a new respondent will be randomly selected from that ward, until the desired response rate is achieved.

For the Key Informant Interviews, all fifteen (15) members of the National Main Street Coordinators' Executive Committee will be invited via email to participate. Personal invitations will also be extended by the research team and the SC statewide coordinator who serves on the NMSCEC.

#### 18. Participant Incentives:

- a. Will you pay participants? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ When will money be paid?: \_\_\_\_\_

- b. Will you give participants incentives / gifts / reimbursements? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Describe incentives / gifts / reimbursements: gift cards

Value of incentives / gifts / reimbursements: \$50 gift cards for survey drawing in each community (\$200 total value)

When will incentives / gifts / reimbursements be given?: after survey closing date

- c. Will participants receive course credit? ☐ Yes ☒ No

- d. Will participants receive extra credit? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If YES, an equivalent alternative to research participation must be provided and described in your informed consent document(s).

#### 19. Informed Consent:

*If all of your participants will be children, please skip this question (19) and complete the Child Research Addendum (available [here](#)). If you will have both children and adults as participants in your study, please complete this question (for the adult participants) AND the Child Research Addendum (for the child participants).*

- a. Will you use concealment or deception in this study? ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If YES, please see guidance regarding Research Involving Deception or Concealment [here](#), submit a copy of the Additional Pertinent Information / Permission for Use of Data Collected in a Research Study form you will use, and request a waiver of some elements of consent below [see 19(e)].*

- b. Do you plan to obtain informed consent from **all your adult research participants** (and / or legally authorized representatives for adult participants with diminished capacity)?

1) ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

If YES, please skip to question 19(c).

**Please submit all applicable Informed Consent documents with application (e.g., adult consent forms, informational letters, verbal consent scripts).**

[Consent Document Templates](#)

If NO, please proceed with questions 19(b)(2)-19(b)(4) to request a **waiver of informed consent**.

If N/A, please explain and skip to question 20. \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) For what groups will you need this waiver of informed consent?  
☐ for all participants ☐ for some participants (describe for which participants): \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Please explain the need for the waiver. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) As provided in 45 CFR 46.116(d), an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain informed consent from research participants if it finds that all of the following criteria are met. Please explain how your study meets each of the criteria below:

Criteria for Waiver of Consent	How is this criterion met within this study?
The research involves no more than minimal risk to subjects.	
The waiver will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects.	
The research could not be carried out practicably without the waiver.	
Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after they have participated in the study.	

If you completed questions 19(b)(2)-19(b)(4) for **all adult research participants**, please skip to question 20.

- c. Who will obtain the participants' consent? Check all that apply:

☒ Principal Investigator ☒ Co-Investigator ☐ Other Research Team Members

☐ Contracted / Hired Data Collection Firm: \_\_\_\_\_

☒ Other: Online

- d. Will you collect participants' signatures on all consent documents?

1) ☐ Yes ☒ No

If YES, please skip to question 19(e).

If NO, please proceed with questions 19(d)(2)-19(d)(3) to request a **waiver of documentation (signature)**.

- 2) For what groups will you need this waiver of documentation?  
☒ for all participants ☐ for some participants (describe for which participants): \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) As provided in 45 CFR 46.117(c), an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all participants if it finds that one of the following sets of criteria is met. Please check **ONE** box below to indicate which set of criteria is met by this study:



- ☒ That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedure for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.
- ☐ That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. If the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, the subject's wishes will govern.

e. Do you plan to use all of the consent elements in all your consent documents or procedures (see list below)?

1) ☒ Yes ☐ No

If YES, please skip to question 20.

If NO, please proceed with questions 19(e)(2)-19(e)(5) to request a **waiver of some elements of consent**.

2) For what groups will you need this waiver of some consent elements?

☐ for all participants ☐ for some participants (describe for which participants): \_\_\_\_\_

3) Please explain the need for the waiver request. \_\_\_\_\_

4) A list of consent elements is given below. Please indicate which of these elements you would like to have waived. (In the case of a study involving deception or concealment, the IRB must waive the requirement to use all elements that are not truthfully presented in the initial consent document.)

List of Elements of Informed Consent	
<input type="checkbox"/> participation involves research	<input type="checkbox"/> maintenance of confidentiality
<input type="checkbox"/> purposes of the research	<input type="checkbox"/> for more than minimal risk research, compensation / treatment available in case of injury
<input type="checkbox"/> duration of participation	<input type="checkbox"/> voluntariness of participation
<input type="checkbox"/> procedures to be followed	<input type="checkbox"/> no penalty for refusal to participate
<input type="checkbox"/> identification of experimental procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> may discontinue participation without penalty
<input type="checkbox"/> foreseeable risks / discomforts	<input type="checkbox"/> disposition of data already collected, upon withdrawal of participant
<input type="checkbox"/> benefits to subjects or others	<input type="checkbox"/> contact for questions about research
<input type="checkbox"/> appropriate alternatives	<input type="checkbox"/> contact for questions about participants' rights
<input type="checkbox"/> advantageous to subject	

5) As provided in 45 CFR 46.116(d), an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to present all consent elements to participants if it finds that all of the following criteria are met. Please explain how your study meets each of the criteria below:

Criteria for Waiver of Elements of Consent	How is this criterion met within this study?
The research involves no more than minimal risk to subjects.	
The waiver will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects.	
The research could not be carried out practicably without the waiver.	
Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after they have participated in the study.	

*Please make sure to submit all Informed Consent documents (i.e., adult consent forms, informational letters, and / or verbal consent scripts) for which elements of consent are being waived.*

## 20. Procedures:

a. What data will you collect? Opinions on economic and community vitality strategies

- b. Please describe in detail the process each participant will experience and how you will obtain the data.

Focus Group (FG) Pre-Event Procedures: Participants will be invited from each Main Street Community to participate in the CV Focus Group discussions 2-3 week before the event. Elected officials, local merchants, and/or local church leaders will be contacted to host and assist with the recruitment of residents to participate in the discussions.

FG Event Procedures: A focus group discussion will be held in each community. Participants will be asked for permission to audio record the session. A brief presentation will be given to showcase some of the recent efforts in economic and community development in the Upstate. Participants will then engage in a group dialogue about the types of interventions that have been tested or explored in their own and other communities. The discussions will cover four (4) domains: their Town's strengths and weaknesses; Their Town's progress toward economic and community vitality using specific economic and community vitality strategies; the role of local leadership and public accountability; and their quality of life.

FG Post-Event Procedures: Focus group participants will be invited to participate in a Post-event Questionnaire. Audio-recordings, notes and post-event questionnaires will be collected and placed in a secure locked file cabinet for transcription purposes and results summarization.

FG Follow-up: Focus group results will be utilized to inform any modifications to the online survey and/or to enrich an understanding of the survey results. Results will also be included in the final report.

Survey Pre-Event Procedures: Based on a sampling frame provided by each town, a stratified random sample of survey participants will be contacted by telephone and / or email inviting them to participate in the survey. Results of the focus groups may also inform the survey further.

Survey Event Procedures: Invited survey participants may take the survey at any time using the link provided. They may also stop and continue their survey at a later time. The period of time will be three to four (3-4) weeks in which each survey will be open in a given case study community. The community survey will present questions on alternative methods for engaging economic and community development. Survey participants will be asked to identify their preferred strategies on dimensions of benefit to the community and benefit to self in achieving a higher quality of life. The online survey will last between 15-20 minutes. No audio recordings will be made.

Survey Post-Event Procedures: Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators may check on the status of the survey to assure a timely participant response. If insufficient response are generated, the survey time table may be extended, reminder notices may be sent, and/or the sample may be expanded through additional random selection of participants.

Survey Follow-up: The results of the survey will be tabulated and analyzed for inclusion in the final report. The results will also be compared to the qualitative findings obtained from the focus group discussions.

Key Informant Interview (KII) Pre-Event Procedures: Key informant interviewees will be contacted via email inviting NMSC Executive Committee members to participate in the hour-long interview on leadership and resident engagement in economic and community development. An introductory letter will also be sent in hard copy to introduce the study. Interviews will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time for the key informant and the interviewee, typically between the hours of 9 am and 4 pm, Monday through Thursday. Interview questions will also be sent in advance for the interviewee's review and advance preparation.

KII Event Procedures: The interviews will be conducted via telephone at the appointed time. At the conclusion of the interview, an optional post-interview set of questions will be asked. The interviews will not be audio recorded, but detailed notes will be taken. It is anticipated that the interviews will be conducted over a four (4) week period.

KII Post-Event Procedures: A follow-up thank you letter will be provided within one week of the interviews' conclusion. Notes taken will be maintained in a secure, locked location for transcription and analysis.

KII Follow-up: The results of the interviews will be analyzed for inclusion in the final report. Shared

themes, insights and recommendations will be identified. Their conclusions will be compared to the results from the case study focus group discussions and survey results where appropriate. Specific policy recommendations will be articulated.

- c. How many participation sessions and how much time will be required for each participant, including follow-up sessions?  
For focus group participants they will be asked to participate in a 1 1/2 hour discussion.

For the community survey, no more than 20 minutes is required.

For the key informant interviews, a more in-depth and richer one-to-one discussion of key topics is to be accomplished with recognized experts in the field. As such, each participant will be invited to participate in an hour-long interview.

- d. How will you collect data?
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in-person contact | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> telephone                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> snail mail                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> email                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> website                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other, describe <u>online survey</u> |

*Please include copies of surveys, interview questions, data collection tools and debriefing statements. If survey or interview questions have not been fully developed, provide information on the types of questions to be asked, or a description of the parameters of the survey / interview. Please note: finalized survey or interview instruments will need to be reviewed and approved by amendment, before implementation.*

- e. Will you audio record participants? ☒ Yes ☐ No  
f. Will you video record participants? ☐ Yes ☒ No  
g. Will you photograph participants? ☐ Yes ☒ No

*If you will audio or video record or take identifiable photographs of participants, please consult the IRB's Guidance on the Use of Audio / Video Recording and Photography [here](#). Please include all the information addressed by this guidance document in the application and, where appropriate, in the consent document(s).*

- 21. Protection of Confidentiality:** Describe the security measures you will take to protect the confidentiality of the information obtained. Will participants be identifiable either by name or through demographic data? If yes, how will you protect the identity of the participants and their responses? Where will the data be stored and how will it be secured? Who will have access to the data? How will identifiers be maintained or destroyed after the study is completed?

**Description:**

The researchers conducting the CV Focus Groups and CV Survey will ask participants about their perceptions concerning which economic and and community vitality strategies are most valued and effective. This should pose only minimal risk to disclose their personal opinions regarding the town and their preferred methods of economic and community development. There will be no adverse affect to the welfare of the subjects other than what they would experience through normal day to day activity and social interaction. Only their opinions will be sought.

Focus group participant discussion logs and audio recordings will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room at Town Hall in Williamston, SC. Audio recordings will be maintained for use in transcription and descriptive analysis of the focus group. These audio recordings will be erased by no later than March 31, 2017.

The CV Survey will be conducted utilizing the SurveyMonkey® survey building and data analytics system.

Data will be stored in a password protected electronic file in a locked room at Town Hall in Williamston, SC, at one of the research team members' home office. Moreover, any hard copy files from the survey will be stored in a locked cabinet in the secure room. The email lists generated for the gift card drawings will be maintained for a period of up to 90 days to conduct a random drawing of the winner from each participating case study location. The participant email list will then be erased.

The key informant interview results will also be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room at Town Hall in Williamston, SC.

## **22. Risk / Benefit Analysis:**

- a. Describe all potential risks (before protective measures are put into place) and benefits for this study. Risks can include physical, psychological, social, legal or other risks connected with the proposed procedures. Benefits can include benefits to the participant or to society in general.

### **Description:**

Potential risks would be associated with the participants' disclosure of their personal opinions about the use of public and private funds to support economic and community development during the CV focus groups or through the survey. There is a small risk in disclosing this information, especially in a group setting, if it is in conflict with their peers' opinions and priorities. The participant could risk minor social retribution or exclusion, although not as likely in this context, as the discussions will not be highly personal in nature, but rather community benefit-oriented.

Benefits of the study will include a wide array of outcomes. These include:

- 1) Education of the community on what economic and community development strategies may be employed;
- 2) Gaining social and community buy-in for future targeted and prioritized economic and community development strategies;
- 3) Development of a partnership with the community;
- 4) Identification of new ideas and concepts for incorporation in the study and the CV Survey;
- 5) New knowledge of the most valued economic and community development strategies for small rural communities similar to the four case study towns;
- 6) Shared knowledge that can be disseminated to other small rural towns that will reduce the learning curve time for emerging economically developing communities.

- b. Describe the procedures to be used to protect against or minimize potential risks. Assess the likely effectiveness of these procedures.

### **Description:**

To avoid any unwarranted reprisal or sanctioning, "Ground Rules" will be established at the beginning of each CV Focus Group session. The rules will include the statement that the comments made during the discussion will not be shared outside of the group nor attributed to any specific member. Participant agreement with the ground rules will be required as part of their verbal social contract to participate in the study. In addition, there will be no attendance sheet maintained, only a head count taken of those in attendance. Verbal consent will also be given to participate in the study as their consent form would be the only written documentation of their participation. Finally, all focus group records will be maintained in a locked file in a secure office location.

The individual opinions expressed in the CV survey and in the key informant interviews will maintained in password protected, electronic files. No individual responses will be reported in the Final Report/Doctoral Dissertation, published articles, or conference presentation. Data will be presented only in aggregate form so as to not be able to attribute individualized response to any particular respondent.

**23. Agreement, Statement of Assurance, and Conflict of Interest Statement by the PI:**

I have reviewed this research protocol and the consent form, if applicable. I have also evaluated the scientific merit and potential value of the proposed research study, as well as the plan for protecting human participants. I have read the [Terms of Assurance](#) held by Clemson University and commit to abiding by the provisions of the Assurance and the determinations of the IRB. I request approval of this research study by the IRB of Clemson University.

I understand that failure to adhere to any of these guidelines may result in immediate termination of the research. I also understand that approval of this research study is contingent upon my agreement to:

1. Report to the IRB any adverse events, research-related injuries or unexpected problems affecting the rights or safety of research participants (All such occurrences must be reported to the IRB within three (3) working days.);
2. Submit in writing for IRB approval any proposed revisions or amendments to this research study;
3. Submit timely continuing review reports of this research as requested by the IRB; and
4. Notify the IRB upon completion of this research study.

**Conflict of Interest Statement:**

Could the results of the study provide an actual or potential financial gain to you, a member of your family, or any of the co-investigators, or give the appearance of a potential conflict of interest?

☒ No.

☐ Yes. I agree to disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest prior to IRB action on this study.

[Financial Conflict of Interest Policy for PHS / NIH Supported Research](#)

[Financial Disclosure Policy for All Other Sponsored Programs](#)

[Disclosure Statement for All Other Sponsored Programs](#)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**24. Statement of Assurance by Department Chair (or supervisor if PI is Department Chair):**

I have reviewed this research protocol and the consent form, if applicable. I verify this proposed research study has received approval in accordance with department procedures. I have evaluated the plan for protecting human participants. I have read the [Terms of Assurance](#) held by Clemson University and commit to abiding by the provisions of the Assurance and the determinations of the IRB. I request approval of this research study by the IRB of Clemson University.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Chair or supervisor if PI is Department Chair (Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Department Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Submission Instructions:**

*Expedited applications* are processed as received. There is no deadline for submitting expedited applications for review. Please allow three weeks for processing.

*Full Board applications* are accepted according to the schedule given [here](#). Researchers are encouraged to attend the meeting at which their protocol will be reviewed, in order to be available to answer any questions IRB members might have about the protocol.

Please submit this application and all associated documents electronically to the [IRB staff](#). In addition, please submit a signed, hard-copy of the application via mail or delivery to the Office of Research Compliance, 223 Brackett Hall, Clemson, SC 29634-5704. Alternatively, you may fax the signed copy to 864-656-4475 or scan and email to [irb@clemson.edu](mailto:irb@clemson.edu).

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**Child (Minor) Research Addendum:**

If your study involves children / minors as participants, click [here](#) to complete the Child Research Addendum. Once completed, please submit the Addendum with your Expedited / Full Board Review Application.

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**Prisoner (Incarcerated Individuals) Research Addendum:**

If your study involves individuals who are incarcerated as participants, click [here](#) to complete the Prisoner Research Addendum. Once completed, please submit the Addendum with your Expedited / Full Board Review Application.

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## IRB Exempt Protocol Extension Request Form

<b>Office use only:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Validated as continuing to meet the criteria for Exempt status Exemption Category _____	Beginning date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Not validated as continuing to meet the criteria for Exempt status	Expiration date: _____
Signature of IRB Chair / Designee _____	IRB Approval Date _____

<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Dr. Lori Dickes
<b>Protocol Number:</b>	IRB2016-265
<b>Research Title:</b>	Community Voices: An Exploration of Economic and Community Vitality in Small Rural Areas

**1. Type of Request:**

- ☐ Extend protocol  
☒ 6 months    ☐ One year    ☐ Two years

**Describe the reason for an extension:** There was a delay in site recruitment due to the holidays, and the Statewide Coordinator for the Main Street Program wished to have the key informant interviews conducted with the new Executive Committee members taking office in 2017. These items have delayed the data collection process, necessitating the extension.

- ☐ Close protocol (**Skip to question 6 if closing protocol**)  
 Protocol may be closed if data collection is complete and the data collected do not include or are linked to any individually identifiable information; in this case, research no longer involves human subjects.

**2. Status of the project:**

- ☐ Protocol unchanged  
☒ Requesting changes (check all that apply):
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> Project goals
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data collection tools/procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Research site(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Informed consent process/forms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subject recruitment methods/selection criteria
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____	

**Summary:** Provide a brief description and rationale for each change. Indicate if any of these changes increase the risk to subjects (attach new or revised documents).

Description: Under Item #8: The Conference presentation date is to be changed from 2017 to 2018 due to the extension; Under Item #16: The population size of case study towns is to be changed from 5,000 to 10,000 and no site letter required (we will use a description of roles instead); and Under Item #17, the Executive Committee has changed in size for 2017, from 15 to 10 members to be interviewed. There is no increased risk to subjects with these proposed changes.

- 3. Enter the names of your current research team members:** Dr. Lori Dickes, Dr. Catherine Mobley, and Sonya Albury-Crandall

All team members' human subjects training must be current to remain on the protocol. Members with expired training or not listed above will be removed from the protocol. IRB training information available at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/training.html>.

4. Have there been changes to your or another research team member's **conflict of interest** statement or situation? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If **yes**, provide a description of the changes: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Has this project received external funding that was **not reported** to the IRB? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If **yes**, include a copy of the grant proposal with the extension form.

6. Have there been any adverse event(s) and/or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others that **you have not reported** to the IRB: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Reportable events include unanticipated psychological discomfort, negative physical reactions, experience of side effects, reports to authorities, and loss of consent forms or data collection instruments. If you have questions about what constitutes a reportable event, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 656-0636. These events must be reported promptly to the IRB.

If **yes**, provide a description of the adverse event(s) and/or other unanticipated problems:

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

---

☐ I am the principal investigator. I am submitting this form electronically and this submission constitutes my signature.

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D

### Focus Group Discussion Questions

#### Community Voices Focus Groups - Facilitator Script 8/23/16

##### INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Thank you for agreeing to participate. Your insights and honest opinions are vital to planning for the future of **Your Town!**

Today we will be discussing economic and community development. Economic development focuses on the efforts of federal, state, and local governments to improve our standard of living through the creation of jobs, the support of innovation and new ideas, the creation of higher wealth, and the creation of an overall better quality of life. Additionally, we want to explore your perspectives on what is generally termed “livable communities.” The term “livability” is defined as the sum of the factors that add up to a community’s quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities. It involves safety, security, affordability, and supportive community services and features. These resources, once in place, foster residents’ engagement in the community’s civic, economic, and social life.

We want to discuss with you today, your perspectives on making the area more economically viable and contributing to a more livable community. Shall we begin?

---

##### ACTIVITY 1: Ice Breaker Introductions (15 minutes)

Set-up materials: Conduct discussion as a group of 8-16 people. Provide a flip chart and markers.

**Question 1. Let’s go around the room and introduce yourselves. Please state your name, where you live or work in Town. Then I would like you to describe what you like best about the Town, and what you like least.**

*(Write responses on flip chart.)*

<i>Best Features / Like Best (Strengths)</i>	<i>Worst Features /Like Least (Weaknesses)</i>
--	--

*Summarize key strengths and weaknesses (e.g. lack of jobs, travel distances to work, shop, etc.). Are there any threats to the most liked features? Are there any opportunities to remedy the features that participants dislike? Discuss how these might influence the Town’s future plans and priorities.*

---

##### ACTIVITY 2: Assessing our Progress Toward Economic and Community Vitality (45 minutes)

Set-up materials: Conduct discussion as a group of 8-16 people. Provide a Town map, display board, 4 blue and 2 green dots for each person.

Step 2.A: Where are we? Where do we want to be? (15 minutes)

**Question 2: Now let's consider where we are on a longitudinal mapping of a community undergoing growth and development. Where are we as a Town that is seeking redevelopment and revitalization? Are we in Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, or Stage 4? (Invite participants to identify where they are as a Town using **BLUE** dots and place them next to the items or activities where they are now; **GREEN** dots for where they would most like to be).**

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Come and visit	Come and stay awhile	Stay overnight	Become a resident
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals</li> <li>• Signature events</li> <li>• Park activities</li> <li>• Special sales events</li> <li>• Season of events</li> <li>• Recreational amenities</li> <li>• Town clean up</li> <li>• Beautification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street sales to partner with major Park events</li> <li>• Food truck rodeos</li> <li>• Specialty stores</li> <li>• Multiple dining venues</li> <li>• Historic sites</li> <li>• Outdoor activities</li> <li>• Trail system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boutique hotels</li> <li>• Bed and breakfasts</li> <li>• 2-day events</li> <li>• Weekend activities</li> <li>• Specialty tours</li> <li>• Art and cultural offerings</li> <li>• Visitor attractions</li> <li>• Weekend/evening hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-use housing</li> <li>• Single family homes</li> <li>• Walkable community</li> <li>• Cultural amenities</li> <li>• Recreational amenities</li> <li>• Name brand hotels</li> </ul>

Step 2.B: How shall we get there? (30 minutes)

Set-up materials: Break up into smaller groups of 4-6 people. Provide a Town map, flip charts, red dots, and markers.

**Question 3. The goal of the next activity is designed to examine which of the activities identified as “where we want to be” are most doable in the next 1-3 years to help stimulate economic and community vitality. In other words, which ones are the low hanging fruit? Secondly, which ones are important, but for the longer term?**

*Invite participants to write their top 3 ideas down for each category (Short Term and Long Term). An expanded sample listing may be provided. Examples: Tree lined streets, Main Street Challenge, tax incentives, affordable housing, a bicycle/pedestrian trail, types of shops/restaurants, etc.*

- Each group writes the top vision items on the ease/impact mapping on the flip chart.
- Ask why these items are important for the short term. Write reasons why next to each vision item on the flip chart. The whys contain values and needs. Do the same for Long Term items.
- Anyone can place a **RED** dot on an item that they “just can’t live with.” This is an important step to allow any discord to be publically noted.

EASE/IMPACT MAPPING		
Short-term (1-3 years) Tasks/Activities	Why Important to the ST? (e.g., low cost, easy to accomplish)	What is its Impact (High/Low)? How would we measure success?
Long-term (4 + Years) Tasks/Activities	Why Important to the LT? (e.g., requires more resources, harder, etc.)	What is its Impact (High/Low)? How would we measure success?

Brief report out:

- A community member from each group reports out
- Report top ST and LT items, the why's, and the anticipated impacts
- Any opposing ideas, red dots?

Discussion

**Question 4. What impact does local leadership have on the community and its ability to engage in economic and community development (to pursue these tasks and outcomes)?**

**Question 5. Do you feel decision-making is conducted in an accountable and transparent manner? Why or Why not?**

**Question 6. Do you believe there will be adequate follow-through on the community's priority recommendations? Why or Why not?**

### ACTIVITY 3: About Your Quality of Life (20 minutes)

*Set-up materials:* Conduct discussion as a group of 8-16 people. Provide a board with rating scales and colored dots. *Blue* for now, and *Green* for the next five years.

**Question 7. Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.**

**On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time, assuming that the higher the step the better you feel about your life, and the lower the step the worse you feel about it? Which step comes closest to the way you feel?**  
(BLUE)

10 Best possible life  
09  
08  
07  
06  
05  
04  
03  
02  
01  
00 Worst possible life

**Question 7a. Why do you feel this way?** *(Optional response.)*

**Question 8. Just your best guess, on which step do you think you will stand in the future, say about five years from now?** *(GREEN)*

10 Best possible life  
09  
08  
07  
06  
05  
04  
03  
02  
01  
00 Worst possible life

**Question 8a. Why do you feel this way?** *(Optional response.)*

**Question 9. Of all the economic and community improvement activities we have discussed today, what investment by the Town would help you improve your ranking toward a better quality of life, and why?**

**Question 10. How would you measure success in creating a more livable community with a higher quality of life? A brighter economic future?**

Possible Examples:

- ☐ Increase in my connections to other people / reduces isolation
- ☐ Increase in personal health, population health
- ☐ Increase in jobs
- ☐ Increase in income
- ☐ Increase in overall ambience (look and feel) in town
- ☐ Reduction in crime
- ☐ Reduction in uncertainty

*Discuss and summarize the responses. Note any differences relative to community improvement priorities and personal priorities for achieving economic vitality and a better quality of life.*

---

**Closing / Next Steps (5 minutes)**

*Optional Post Forum Questionnaire and Sign-up Sheet for email notification.  
Invite participants to fill out the Post Forum Questionnaire. Note that final report will be announced and posted on the Main Street Program's website. Thank all participants for attending and sharing their views.*

*The research team members will create project touchstones and alternative project concepts based on the meeting outcomes to be included in the final report of focus group discussions and for possible incorporation into the community survey.*

**Optional – Post Forum Questionnaire (to help us see if different groups are thinking differently):**

1. Do you have a different perspective of economic and community development than before you participated in the forum?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
If yes, please explain:
2. Do you envision ways for community members to work together on issues of economic and community vitality that you didn't see before?
3. What, if anything, would you personally be willing to do to help move the community forward on this issue of economic development and community vitality?
4. How much do you think you can trust the local government to do what is right?  
☐ Just about always  
☐ Most of the time  
☐ Only some of the time  
☐ Hardly ever
5. What is your age?  
☐ 18 to 24    ☐ 25 to 34    ☐ 35 to 44    ☐ 45 to 54  
☐ 55 to 64    ☐ 65 to 74    ☐ 75 or older    ☐ Decline to state

6. Which of these groups best describes your racial and ethnic background? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Some other race or ethnicity (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Where do you live?

- ☐ Inside Town Limits
- ☐ Outside Town limits
- ☐ Another location (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E

Community Voices Online Survey



## COMMUNITY VOICES 2017-01

### Welcome to the **Community Voices Survey!**

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted about the future of your town -- Williamston, SC. The research is being conducted by your local Main Street Program in conjunction with the College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences at Clemson University. You are being asked because you are age 18 years or older and a member of the community.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to survey your opinions about economic development and community vitality.

**Participation:** You will be asked a series of questions to help us better understand the needs and perspectives of the town. We expect your participation to take about 15 minutes.

**Risks & Benefits:** There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation. We expect the project to benefit you by possibly furthering your understanding of the community in which you live. We also expect this research to benefit society by advancing knowledge of how community members perceive different approaches to economic and community development.

**Voluntary Participation:** Please understand that participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect your current or future relationship with the town or Clemson University. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason.

**Confidentiality:** Your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. In order to preserve the confidentiality of responses, email addresses and electronic survey responses will be password protected and the computer that stores this information will be kept in a locked room.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research, please contact me at 2023 Barr Hall, Clemson University, or [lolid@clemson.edu](mailto:lolid@clemson.edu). You can also contact my Co-investigator, Sonya Crandall at [sonya@g.clemson.edu](mailto:sonya@g.clemson.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or [irb@clemson.edu](mailto:irb@clemson.edu). If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.



Once you have completed the survey, you may register to enter a gift card drawing. A gift card will be awarded to one randomly selected survey respondent participating from your town.

Dr. Lori Dickes, Principal Investigator  
864-980-3135

COMMUNITY VOICES 2017-01

I. Overall Community Assessment

1. What are your reasons for choosing to live and/or work in the Town?*Please mark your top three (3) choices:*

- ☐ Quality of life
- ☐ Cost of living
- ☐ Low crime rate
- ☐ Job opportunities
- ☐ Sense of community
- ☐ Quality of schools
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Recreation opportunities
- ☐ Good place to raise children
- ☐ Other (please specify)

## COMMUNITY VOICES 2017-01

### I. Overall Community Assessment *Continued*

2. How satisfied are you with the condition of the following elements of Town services and features? *Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.*

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Streets & roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sidewalks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water & sewer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Police & fire protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Growth management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Residential properties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commercial properties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Overall Ratings of the Town. *Please mark the box that best represents your level of satisfaction with the Town elements listed below.*

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
As a place to live.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a place to raise children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a place to work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a place to retire.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a place to own and operate a small business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## II. Traditional Economic Development Measures

**The Town is exploring several different options to help improve the economic viability of the Town.**

4. Please tell us how strongly you would support or oppose the economic development options below.  
Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.

	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
The Town's efforts to attract more visitors to the area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town's efforts to make the historic downtown area a shopping and dining destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town's active support for expansion of existing businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town's efforts to help residents shop local (Reduce retail leakage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town's efforts to attract new businesses to the area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town's efforts to improve the overall look and feel of the Town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

II. Traditional Economic Development Measures *Continued*

**Business Attraction, Expansion, and Retention**

5. Which of the following business attraction, expansion, and retention activities should your local government or economic development organization pursue? *Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

- ☐ Identify vacant and underutilized buildings for development or redevelopment
- ☐ Offer a "One-stop shop" for business inquiries
- ☐ Conduct networking and information sharing "Drop-ins" for businesses and town officials
- ☐ Offer a "Main Street Challenge" that would provide 1st year rental assistance to 2-3 new businesses
- ☐ Offer pop-up shops to try-out new business ventures
- ☐ Develop speculative buildings as "move-in ready" shell space to attract new businesses
- ☐ Encourage shared space arrangements for new small businesses (incubators)
- ☐ Help existing businesses prepare for major corporate entries into the market
- ☐ Offer financial Incentives to existing property owners and local businesses for expansion into new product or service lines
- ☐ Other (please specify)

II. Traditional Economic Measures *Continued*

6. Which of the following marketing strategies do you feel are most needed or beneficial to promote the Town to prospective business owners and visitors? *Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

- ☐ A "Buy Local" campaign
- ☐ Billboards and Way-finding signs
- ☐ Bumper stickers and T-shirts with imprints of "Williamston – spring to life!"
- ☐ First Friday events – evening shopping with live music and discounts at local businesses
- ☐ Electronic message board
- ☐ Welcome signs at key entrances to the Town
- ☐ Promotional materials (brochures, rack cards, dining and shopping guides)
- ☐ Mobile app on "What's Happening in Williamston"
- ☐ Welcome Center or Visitor's Center
- ☐ Other (please specify)

III. Quality of Life as Economic Development

**Quality of life has become increasingly important for communities seeking a competitive advantage. Businesses care about quality of life issues because they are important to their workers. People often prefer to live in places that offer amenities such as a walkable downtown, arts and culture, community activities, and a healthy place in which to live, work and play.**

7. Which of the following activities should your local government or economic development organization pursue to make the Town a more desirable and attractive place to live and work? *Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

- ☐ Banners, attractive gateways and other streetscaping activities
- ☐ Building facade improvements (e.g. painting, lighting, awnings)
- ☐ Public art displays (e.g. building murals, Mustangs on Main)
- ☐ Neighborhood revitalization
- ☐ More community parks and gardens
- ☐ A performing arts center
- ☐ Local historic markers
- ☐ Other (please specify)

III. Quality of Life as Economic Development *Continued*

8. Which health and wellness programs should your local government or economic development organization promote in order to encourage healthy lifestyles and high quality of life? *Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

- ☐ Farmer's market
- ☐ Gym or fitness center
- ☐ Community pool
- ☐ Miniature golf
- ☐ Parks and children's facilities
- ☐ Skateboard park
- ☐ Sports complex
- ☐ Tennis courts
- ☐ Bicycle and pedestrian trails
- ☐ Other (please specify)

9. Which community engagement programs should your local government or economic development organization pursue to encourage community involvement? *Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

- ☐ Local contests – e.g., Scarecrow or Photography Contest
- ☐ Clubs – e.g., biking, Friends of the Park
- ☐ Community events & parades
- ☐ Movie nights
- ☐ Historic tours
- ☐ Arts crawl or walk to view local artist demonstrations
- ☐ Other (please specify)

## IV. Overall Impact

10. Which of the following activities do you think has the greatest impact on the community, and to you as an individual resident and/or member of the business community? *Please mark your top three (3) choices for each column.*

	Greatest Impact on the Town	Greatest Impact on Me
Offering financial incentives to attract new businesses and business expansion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hosting local events to attract visitors to the Town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promoting the existing assets of the Town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving the look and feel of the Town through beautification efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving the art and cultural offerings of the Town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving the health and recreational activities and facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expanding the social activities of the Town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

11. Which two (2) of the items listed above do you believe would provide the Town with the best value for its investment? *Please type your responses in the space below.*



V. Looking Forward

12. What do you believe is the downtown/commercial district's greatest challenge in 2018?*Please type your response in the space below.*

13. Please tell us to what extent Town government should be involved in improving economic viability.  
*Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.*

- ☐ Highly involved
- ☐ Somewhat involved
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not very involved
- ☐ Not at all involved
- ☐ No opinion

V. Looking Forward *Continued*

14. Over the next ten (10) years, the Town should: *Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Increase recreational opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase residential construction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attract new business/commercial/service development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Control the rate and type of development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protect the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preserve or restore historic structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintain/improve open space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve traffic flow, roads and signage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase public parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve overall look and feel of the Town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

V. Looking Forward *Continued*

15. If you agree with that the Town needs commercial development, what kinds of commercial development do you think the Town should attract and promote? *Please mark your top five (5) choices.*

- ☐ Fast food restaurants
- ☐ Supermarkets
- ☐ Entertainment facilities
- ☐ Financial institutions
- ☐ Coffee shops
- ☐ Clothing stores
- ☐ Personal services (e.g., salons)
- ☐ Restaurants other than fast food
- ☐ Convenient/drug stores
- ☐ Hotels/motels
- ☐ Discount stores
- ☐ Gift/tourist shops
- ☐ Auto dealer/service stations
- ☐ Home and garden supplies
- ☐ Sporting goods store
- ☐ None of the above. The Town does not need commercial development.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

V. Looking Forward *Continued*

16. To what extent would you support the Town's using the following mechanisms to implement some of the Town improvements? *Please mark the box that best represents your opinion.*

	Strongly Support	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Public / Private partnerships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grants programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
User fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Private donations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business association support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bond referendum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increases in service fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voluntary purchase of dedication plaques	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offering tax incentives for new business attraction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offering tax rebates for new businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

17. If you were to ask the Town to invest in one (1) economic vitality activity, that would promote the economic well-being of the Town, what would it be? *Please type your response in the space below.*

18. If you were to ask the Town to invest in one (1) community vitality activity to promote the quality of life for residents and visitors, what would it be? *Please type your response in the space below.*

VI. About You

**Now we just have a few demographic questions. These are only for statistical purposes and will remain completely confidential and will not be used to identify individuals.**

19. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

20. What is your age?

- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75 or older

21. How many children are you parent or guardian for and live in your household (aged 17 or younger only)?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ More than 4

About You *Continued*

22. Which of these groups best describes your racial and ethnic background? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Some other race or ethnicity (please specify)

23. How would you describe yourself? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ A resident of Town
- ☐ A business owner in Town
- ☐ A property owner in Town
- ☐ A worker in Town
- ☐ I do not live or work in Town.

24. Of what community groups do you consider yourself to be a part? *Please mark all that apply.*

- ☐ Business community
- ☐ Church community
- ☐ Civic community
- ☐ Educational community
- ☐ Public service community
- ☐ Sports and recreation community
- ☐ Arts and cultural community
- ☐ Health care community
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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About You *Continued*

25. If a resident, how many years have you lived in Town?

- ☐ Less than one (1) year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-9 years
- ☐ 10 years or more

26. What is the ZIP Code of your primary residence?*Please type your response in the space below.*

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Enter To Win

27. If you would like to register for a \$50 gift card drawing, please type your email address in the space below.

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End of Survey

***Thank you for completing the survey. Your input is important to our Town!***

## Appendix F

### Key Informant Interview Questionnaire

#### **Community Voices Key Informant Interview Questions 08/24/16**

*(Questions will be sent in advance)*

---

Welcome to the Community Voices Key Informant Interviews. I am Sonya Crandall, Co-Investigator for the Community Voices Study of local Main Street Programs. This research is being conducted to learn more about leadership engagement in economic and community development. The interview will last about an hour.

Your individual responses will be kept strictly confidential. The confidentiality disclosure has been provided. By being a member of the discussion you are agreeing to participate. All responses will be kept confidential as all input will be delineated and reported in aggregate form.

Thank you for agreeing to participate. Your insights and honest opinions are vital to planning for the future of our towns. Shall we begin?

Your individual responses will be kept strictly confidential. The confidentiality disclosure has been provided. By being a member of the discussion you are agreeing to participate. All responses will be kept confidential as all input will be delineated and reported in aggregate form.

Thank you for agreeing to participate. Your insights and honest opinions are vital to planning for the future of our towns. Shall we begin?

#### ***I. General Leadership and Economic Vitality***

##### **Question 1: Role of Local Leaders**

**Based on your experience and observations as a Main Street leader, what is the role of local leadership in the success of a Main Street Program in promoting economic vitality?**

##### **Question 2: Impact of Leaders**

**What impact does local leadership have on the community and its ability to engage in economic and community development?**

##### **Question 3: Type of Leaders**

**What types of leaders are most important to engage for successful economic development and community vitality? (e.g., Government, Non-profits, Corporate Citizens, Small to Mid-sized Businesses, Other).**

##### **Question 4: General Success Factors**



According to Stumpf (2010), the predictive factors for career success include: gaining the buy-in and commitment of others; effective use of resources, fostering a climate of innovation and learning, building trust and modeling ethical behavior, and embracing change.

**Which of these factors are most important to success in your Main Street Program, and why?**

#### **Question 5: Success Factors in Small Town Revitalization**

According to Schultz (2004), other traits are important to local community leadership and revitalization, particularly for small towns. Some of these include an open, can do attitude; a strong vision for the town, a climate of teamwork, putting the community's welfare as the top priority, listening to local citizens, and not being afraid to confront challenges or problems. The sharing of leadership and benefits as well as development of leaders for the future is advanced.

**Which, if any, of these traits ring true for the success you've experienced in your community? Can you provide an example of when some of these leadership attributes were of benefit?**

---

## ***II. Local Government Leadership***

#### **Question 6: Local Government Role**

**In your opinion, what specific role does local government have in economic and community development? On a scale of one to ten, 1 being very little involvement and 10 being very involved, how would you rate your local government's involvement in advancing economic vitality?**

#### **Question 7: Successful Governmental Factors and Economic Development**

According to Stiglitz, 2002, public accountability and an informed citizenry is critical to the well-being of a national democracy. Moreover, he advances that an open and transparent government will lead to better policy making and greater long-term economic success.

**To what extent is public engagement and consensus building important to local economic and community development? How is this engagement realized in your community? Is it one time, or ongoing? How is it achieved? What impact does it have?**

#### **Question 8: Transparency and Accountability**

**How important is transparency and accountability in your community? What does this mean to you? Can you provide an example of how you achieve this? Why is it important?**

#### **Question 9: Models of Policy Change and Agenda Setting**

I am going to briefly describe four (4) models of governmental policy making.

- 5) Principal/Agent Theory: The government leaders make decisions and local business, community volunteers and staff implement their public policy directives. The closer the agent is to the principal, the more influential the principal is in achieving his/her policy agenda. (Mitnick, 2006)
- 6) Policy Networks Model: Different subsystem networks convene to influence government officials and advance their economic development agendas. Leaders have tightly held belief systems that guide their policy-making decisions. (Sabatier, 2007)

- 7) Multiple Streams Theory: The problem, solution and political streams operate independently, but must come together to effectuate change. Generally, a “focusing event” is needed to coalesce these three streams. (Kingdon, 2011)
- 8) Systems Theory: Social systems are patterned activities of a number of individuals in a given environment. They rely on feedback, and create a variety of paths to the same goal (“equifinality”). A change in one aspect of the system affects other parts of the system. This occurs because the system is “open” with no clear boundaries. (Katz and Kahn, 1966).

**Do any of these models/theories characterize how economic development and policy change currently occurs in your community? Why or why not?**

**What is your view on how local policy making should be conducted for economic revitalization? Why?**

---

### *III. Quality of Life and Leadership*

#### **Questions 10 and 11: Quality of Life Ladder**

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you and your community.

**10. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel your community stands at this time, assuming that the higher the step the better you feel about your community, and the lower the step the worse you feel about it? Which step comes closest to the way you feel?**

10 Best possible life  
 09  
 08  
 07  
 06  
 05  
 04  
 03  
 02  
 01  
 00 Worst possible life

**10a. Why do you feel this way? (Optional response.)**

**11. Just your best guess, on which step do you think your community will stand in the future, say about five years from now?**

10 Best possible life  
09  
08  
07  
06  
05  
04  
03  
02  
01  
00 Worst possible life

**Question 11a. Why do you feel this way? (Optional response.)**

**Question 12. How do you measure success for your community and its ability to set the stage for the “best possible life”?**

**Question 13. Leadership and Quality of Life - How does local leadership contribute to your feelings about the quality of life in your community?**

---

#### ***IV. Ideas for Change***

**Question 14. If you could change one aspect of the leadership in your organization what would it be?**

**Question 15. If you could change one aspect of leadership in your community, what change do you believe would make the biggest impact? Why?**

**Question 16. What else needs to change? Policy? Something else?**

---

#### ***V. About You (Optional)***

**Question 17. What is your gender?**

- ☐ Female  
☐ Male

**Question 18. What is your age?**

- ☐ 18 to 24    ☐ 25 to 34    ☐ 35 to 44    ☐ 45 to 54  
☐ 55 to 64    ☐ 65 to 74    ☐ 75 or older    ☐ Decline to state

**Question 19. Which of these groups best describes your racial and ethnic background?**

*Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ White or Caucasian  
☐ Black or African-American  
☐ Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Some other race or ethnicity (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**Question 20. How long have you been involved in the Main Street Program? \_\_\_\_\_ (in years)**

**Question 21. In which state is your Main Street Program located? \_\_\_\_\_ (name of state)**

**Closing**

*Ask participants if they would like to a copy of the final report. Thank all participants for attending and sharing their views.*

## Appendix G

### Focus Group / Intercept Interview Synopses

#### **Focus Group Discussion #1: Town of Williamston**

**Date:** November 15, 2016

**Location:** Town Hall, 12 W. Main Street, Williamston, SC 29697

**Host:** Palmetto Business Association (PBA)

**Attendance:** 19 Community Members

**Duration:** 12:15 PM – 1:15 PM

This focus group discussion took place at Town Hall in the town of Williamston. The local business association hosted the meeting, and nineteen (19) community members were present. They represented the following affiliations: retail (4); local government (3); health care (3); banking (2); architecture (2); food service (2); faith community (1); insurance (1); outdoor/recreation (1); community organization (1); and the local media (1).

#### **Introduction**

Sonya Crandall, Facilitator, welcomed the attendees to the focus group discussion. She thanked the PBA for hosting the session. Ms. Crandall noted the twofold purpose of Envision Williamston that is to promote community engagement and economic vitality. This bifurcated approach underscores Envision Williamston's intention to invite community residents and business leaders to have a strong voice in the future economic development of their town. In a similar manner, Clemson University is conducting a study called "Community Voices" that is designed to assess what local community members view as having the potential to improve their quality of life as their towns undergo economic revitalization. Dr. Lori Dickes and she are leading the study. While Dr. Dickes could not be present, Ms. Hall would assist with note taking.

Ms. Crandall then went over some essential information. She discussed informed consent information and why it was important. Then she provided two definitions: one for "economic development" and another for "livability." She emphasized the importance of identifying what would lead to a more economically viable and livable community.

#### **Activity 1: Best and Worst Features of the Area**

As an icebreaker, the group discussion began with the participants identifying the features they liked best about their town/area, and what they liked least. Their responses were written on a flip chart. The mayor of West Pelzer inquired if the discussion was solely on Williamston or the Palmetto area in general. Given there was sufficient attendance and interest about the Palmetto area, the facilitator indicated that they could make comments pertaining to the Williamston, W. Pelzer, and Pelzer area as covered by the local business association (Williamston being the largest town). Below are their comments in [BLUE](#):

Best Features	Worst Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Public Spaces</u>: Mineral Spring Park (2+), impressive Town Hall</li> <li>• <u>Public Events</u>: Festivals</li> <li>• <u>Location</u>: Proximity to Greenville</li> <li>• <u>Education</u>: Good Schools, Career Center</li> <li>• <u>Arts &amp; Culture</u>: Artory</li> <li>• <u>Economic Development</u>: Huge potential</li> <li>• <u>Placemaking</u>: Visual growth</li> <li>• <u>Safety</u>: Safe place for families</li> <li>• <u>Cleanliness</u>: The area is noticeably clean and well-kept</li> <li>• <u>Business Friendly</u>: Friendly environment to start a business</li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Vacancies</u>: Empty buildings</li> <li>• <u>Visual Clutter</u>: Power lines</li> <li>• <u>Placemaking</u>: Unattractive facades, dilapidated buildings and housing</li> <li>• <u>Market Leakage</u>: Loss of revenue</li> <li>• <u>Arts &amp; Culture</u>: Poor visibility, attendance at Artory events</li> <li>• <u>Community Engagement</u>: Need for greater involvement, promotion</li> <li>• <u>Limited Dining</u>: Need more food service options with adult beverages</li> <li>• <u>Missed Opportunities</u>: Spillover from events and festivals; need to capitalize on growth around us</li> <li>• <u>Transportation</u>: Need for bus service to grocery, health care, events, etc.</li> <li>• <u>Adjacency</u>: Mill Hills, and other transient housing areas; lack of resident stability in rental housing/outside communities</li> <li>• <u>Business Friendly</u>: Could enhance resources and services to new and expanding businesses.</li> </ul>

The group generally felt that change was coming to their towns and that it was up to them to take advantage of these opportunities to their area. The historic Mineral Spring Park is their greatest asset, and many participants mentioned the fun and family friendly events held there. The biggest hurdle would be to tie the leading attributes of the towns together to capitalize on their strengths, e.g. the Mill Town Players, and then post-event places to go to for dining and follow-up gatherings. Moreover, there did not seem to be enough promotion of existing events, arts and cultural opportunities for local residents, or the means (e.g., transportation) by which to attend them. In addition, the overall look of the town is noticeably clean and well kept, but there are several abandoned and dilapidated buildings that need refurbishing to improve the overall appearance of the area and make it look more inviting.

#### Activity 2.A: Assessing Our Progress Town Economic and Community Vitality

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<i>Come and visit</i>	<i>Come and stay awhile</i>	<i>Stay overnight</i>	<i>Become a resident/invest</i>

Ms. Crandall then invited participants to view a poster board showing a “longitudinal mapping” (or matrix of stages) of a community undergoing growth and development. She asked participants, “Where are we as a Town/Area that is seeking redevelopment and revitalization? Are we in Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, or Stage 4?” She briefly provided examples of development activities at each progressive stage, ending with an example of a new business in Greenville. Two entrepreneurs were headed south to Orlando. They stopped for the night in Greenville and fell in

love with the downtown, where they decided to launch their business. Stage 4 then is where business leaders invest, live, work and play.

Participants were asked to take four blue dots and place them next to where they feel their town is “at this time.” Then they were to take two green dots and place them next to the items where they felt they would most “like to be.”

The results were compelling. The group overwhelmingly placed their blue dots (where they are now) in *Stage 1: Come and Visit*. The most marked items under this stage were “Festivals” (13), “Park Activities” (11), and “Signature Events” (9). They also marked the town’s “Season of Events” (8), a new campaign that was launched in 2016. Less prominently marked were “Town cleanup” and “Beautification” with 4 votes each. Recreational amenities received a slightly lesser number (3). A few blue dots were also placed in the *Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile* column. These items included “Historical sites” (2), “Food trucks” (1), and “Trail system” (1). It should be noted that W. Pelzer has the Sassy Sow food truck on highway 8 on a regular basis; and that Williamston has launched its plans for a new trail system with its ¼ mile installment that is about 1 year old. The only blue dots placed in *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*, was next to “Arts and cultural offerings.” Williamston has its Artory (former armory converted to an arts center) and Pelzer has the Mill Town Players, a local community theater operating out of the Pelzer Auditorium that offers six productions a year.

Placement of votes for the green dots of where they “would like to be” revealed another story. Most of these dots were placed in *Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile*. Several indicated that this is next logical step for them to take. The leading features included “Multiple dining venues” (7), closely followed by “Outdoor activities” (6), and then by “Food truck rodeos” (3), Specialty stores” (2), and “Trail system” (2). In addition, several people marked items in *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*. The most desired item was “Bed and Breakfasts” (5), followed by “Visitor attractions” (4), more “Art and cultural offerings” (2), and “Weekend activities or evening hours” (2-3). Only one person indicated an item in *Stage 4: Become a Resident/Invest* and marked the desire for a “Name brand hotel” (1).

During the discussion, participants noted that they were trying to be realistic about where they are at this time, predominantly in Stage 1 with a few overlays into Stage 2. They wish to logically move into a full Stage 2 scenario with more dining venues, specialty stores, and perhaps overnight accommodations through a B&B (Stage 3). They are not opposed to becoming a Stage 4 location attracting new residents and investors; they simply feel they are not yet ready for that level of engagement.

### **Step 2.B: How Shall We Get There?**

The second part of assessing their progress toward economic and community vitality was to examine how to move toward where they want to be, and which are most doable in the next 1-3 years. The first step is to identify the “low hanging fruit” for the short-term, and then secondly, which activities are most important, but for the longer term.

Participants were invited to write down their top 3 ideas for each category (Short Term and Long Term). They broke out into four groups, as they were seated at four round tables. Most stayed at their table. Participants were given 10 minutes to brainstorm and reach a consensus. If one person

did not agree with their group, they were allowed to place a red dot next to that item. Each group was given one worksheet and one person served as the Recorder for the group.

After an extended discussion (15 minutes), each group identified one member to report out their recommendations. A summary of their recommendations is provided below. Individual group worksheets for Groups 1-4 provide additional detail.

Short Term	Why now?	Impact		Long Term	Why important?	Impact
Retail, Specialty shops (2)	Incentives have low cost to town			Sustainable businesses		
Food Trucks	Brings people to town					
Appearance, Atmosphere	Draws people in			Façade improvement	Based on market trends; requires private investment	
B&B (2)	This could be easily done with the right investor	High, more people staying and spending; more people seen		Boutique Hotel / B&B	Keep people here, requires longer incentives that have higher cost	A tax revenue; high tax impact
Dining, Upscale Restaurant with atmosphere (4)	Right investor needed; resident retention	High, more people staying and spending \$ in the area; a draw; something to do; high tax return				
Small Scale Events, e.g. musicians, plays, Friday nights	Encourage more people to move here	Families visit and stay		Arts and culture	Takes \$ resources, and investors	High, offers something structured to do and will bring people
Investors				Downtown Living	Makes businesses flourish, keeps them afloat	Sustains/increases population
				Cleanup Streets behind Main Street	Engage owners, condemn property	High, no one wants to see ugly
				Housing	Engage the right investors	High, will help overall look; give the town a hometown atmosphere
Recreational amenities	Based on market trends			Sports & Rec		



The group also noted that they need progressive leaders for guidance to achieve these aims. They also articulated the need for investors, more people engaged, and increased tax revenues.

To follow-up on the leadership role, Ms. Crandall invited participants to describe what they feel are the roles of local leaders and their impact on achieving these aims in the future. Several noted that they value the leadership of the two mayors present. They identified their leadership roles as:

- Communicator
- Coordinator
- Guider
- Facilitator of the process
- Attractor of new businesses (especially of stable businesses)
- Incentive offerer

Ms. Crandall noted that this is important to record what leadership does for other communities seeking to learn how to approach their own revitalization. As such, several participants expressed that their town/area would be stuck in the past and far before Stage 1, if it not for the current leadership and their vision.

### **Activity 3: About Your Quality of Life**

In this final activity, Ms. Crandall invited participants to think about their current Quality of Life as it is “At this time.” She asked everyone to each take another blue dot and place it on the poster with the *Quality of Life Ladder – At This Time* heading, with 00 being the “Worst possible life,” and 10 being the “Best possible life.” Then she asked them to each take a green dot and place it on the *Quality of Life Ladder – In the Future* poster. Given the prospects of today’s discussion, where would they rank themselves on the ladder in the next five years?

The results for the participants’ happiness ratings “At this time” were clustered between scores of 3 to 7. Most gave a rating of 6-7 (5 each), while three indicated a happiness score of 5, two of 4, and one of 3. Three participants did not participate. Overall, the group gave themselves an average happiness score of 5.69 points on a scale of 0-10.

Participant happiness ratings “in the future” then soared, as they indicated their expected quality of life anticipated in the next five years. Scores ranged from a low of 6 to a high of 10. Six indicated a score of 10, two of 9, four of 8, two of 7, and one of 6. One marked it above the scale (off the charts!). On average, the overall score was 8.75 on a scale of 0-10.

Participants reported that they gave themselves a higher score in the future because of the forward momentum that is being generated by their current local leaders. To be successful they feel they will need to continue in this direction, keep the vision alive, and recruit more volunteers and investors in their communities to help them realize their dreams. Creation of the Community Master Plan was a particularly valuable activity, because it laid out the potential for the area and where they could go as a location. They would need to work together and build on their strengths in order to succeed. With their leaders guidance, however, they will also need the dedicated work of community members and investors to help finance these grand but strategic directions for their communities. While there is no one activity that will singularly help contribute to their happiness, the collective array of people working together toward a common set of goals gave them hope and inspiration for the future.

### Post Questionnaire (n=7)

One respondent observed that they are seeing increased interest in cooperative efforts. This was viewed as exciting. One participant also indicated that they wished each business had a volunteer to represent each company. Then when volunteers are needed, they could count on said volunteers when participation is needed.

Trust in government occurs “most of the time” (60%), or “just about always” (40%).

All participants were White or Caucasian.

Participant ages range from 35-44 years (20%), to 55-64 (60%), and to 65-74 (20%).

Focus group participants were equally from inside the Town of Williamston (40%) and just outside the town limits (40%). One post-questionnaire respondent was from Powdersville (20%).

### **Focus Group Discussion #2: City of Laurens**

**Date:** February 22, 2017

**Location:** Roma Restaurant, 105 E Laurens St, Laurens, SC 29360

**Host:** Main Street Laurens and its Merchant Group

**Attendance:** 11 Community Members

**Duration:** 7:45 AM – 9:30 AM

#### **Introduction**

Sonya Crandall, Facilitator, thanked Jonathan Irick for hosting today’s focus group discussion and thanked those present for attending. Ms. Crandall introduced herself and Dr. Lori Dickes, the Principal Investigator for the study. She noted the twofold purpose of Envision Williamston that is to promote community engagement and economic vitality. This bifurcated approach underscores Envision Williamston’s intention to invite community residents and business leaders to have a strong voice in the future economic development of their town. In a similar manner, Clemson University is conducting a study called “Community Voices” that is designed to assess what local community members view as having the potential to improve their quality of life as their towns undergo economic revitalization.

Ms. Crandall also went over some essential information. She discussed informed consent information and why it was important. She emphasized the importance of retaining their individual confidentiality and reporting the results in aggregate form. She also added how the results would be shared with other communities starting out as they seek to undertake local community and economic revitalization activities.

#### **Activity 1: Best and Worst Features of the Area**

Dr. Dickes then began with an icebreaker activity. The group discussion began with the participants introducing themselves, and then identifying the features they liked best about their town/area, and what they liked least. Their responses were written on a flip chart. Below are their comments in [BLUE](#):

Best Attributes	Challenge Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Showcase the Downtown Central Area:</u> Downtown Square / Courthouse area (6+); it's unique character makes it a great venue for events.</li> <li>• <u>Capitalize on Location:</u> Close proximity to Greenville, SC.</li> <li>• <u>Enjoy the Hometown/"Cool" Feel:</u> Several noted Lauren's small town feel &amp; charm.</li> <li>• <u>Charming Homes:</u> Some noted that they want to preserve the charm.</li> <li>• <u>Has Potential:</u> Want to capitalize on its potential for new restaurants, more variety, and complementary offerings such as a Coffee House and Ice Cream Shoppe.</li> <li>• <u>Has a History:</u> Was a successful, active town in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Can be that way again; the same, but different.</li> <li>• <u>Embracing Change:</u> Need to capitalize on new, upcoming ideas and ambitions. Some returning young adults and those new to the area are bringing "creative, outside the box" thinking to the area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Vacancies:</u> Empty structures and lack of maintenance/upkeep have led to severe building deterioration (3+) and several have left their "homes to rot." Prospective homebuyers, new business owners, or renters are skeptical of adjacent properties, even when a well-kept space is available.</li> <li>• <u>Weak Code Enforcement:</u> The weak code enforcement allows local property owners to avoid upkeep costs (2).</li> <li>• <u>Rental Housing:</u> Severe lack of affordable rental housing.</li> <li>• <u>Schools:</u> The school system needs upgrading and advanced learning opportunities should be offered nearby.</li> <li>• <u>Brain Drain:</u> Conversely, some of the most talented students are leaving the area.</li> <li>• <u>Limited Social Life:</u> The social life for singles is especially inadequate.</li> <li>• <u>Resource Challenged:</u> Many noted that they lack sufficient resources from public sources, investors, or developers to help young entrepreneurs realize their goals.</li> <li>• <u>Divided Community:</u> It was somewhat unclear; perhaps some are more progressive than others.</li> <li>• <u>Shop Local Challenge:</u> Several agreed that they need more community support for shopping in town rather than traveling to Fountain Inn, Greenwood, or Greenville (3+).</li> </ul>

The group generally felt that the town had some key unique assets, such as its Downtown Historic Square and charming hometown look and feel. The look and feel of the town is also one of its challenges as some property owners have let their buildings deteriorate with no repercussions from the town leadership. Several focus group participants noted that they would like to have a more active city council whereas others would just like them to "get out of the way" to allow more of the needed investment and reinvestment within the town. This mixed attitude could underscore the dividedness within the community itself. There may be a need to rally behind a common plan and/or dedicated leadership with whom the majority can support.

## Activity 2.A: Assessing Our Progress Town Economic and Community Vitality

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<i>Come and visit</i>	<i>Come and stay awhile</i>	<i>Stay overnight</i>	<i>Become a resident/invest</i>

Ms. Crandall then invited participants to view a poster board showing a “longitudinal mapping” (or matrix of stages) of a community undergoing growth and development. She asked participants, “Where are we as a Town/Area that is seeking redevelopment and revitalization? Are we in Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, or Stage 4?” She briefly provided examples of development activities at each progressive stage, ending with a fully developed and integrated live/work and play environment.

Participants were asked to take four blue dots and place them next to where they feel their town is “at this time.” Then they were to take two green dots and place them next to the items where they felt they would most “like to be.”

The results were spread around quite a lot across all four stages, albeit there were some clear areas of emphasis. The group overwhelmingly placed their blue dots (where they are now) in *Stage 1: Come and Visit*. The most marked items under this stage were “Festivals” (10) and “Season of events” (6). They also marked “Recreational amenities” (3), “Signature events”(2), “Town cleanup” (2), and “Beautification” (2).

For the *Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile* column, participants were most likely to “Specialty Stores” (5), but one noted that they need more of them. The also marked “Outdoor Activities” (3), and “Historical sites”(2). The only blue dot placed in *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*, was next to “Weekend activities” (1). While they largely skipped over Stage 3, several participants used their blue dots to mark features in Stage 4. These included “[Advanced] recreational amenities (3), “Walkable community” (2), and “Single family homes”(2).

Placement of votes for the green dots of where they “would like to be” revealed another story. Most of these dots were placed in *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*, and *Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile*. The leading features included “Bed & breakfast” accommodations (4) or “Boutique hotels (2); closely followed by “Multiple dining venues” (3), “Weekend /evening hours (3), “Arts & cultural offerings (3), and “Visitor attractions” (2). A few others suggested more specialty stores, a food truck rodeo, and wrote in financial assistance for small businesses, and a pavilion that is accessible and closely connected to the downtown area. Still others recommended more “Cultural amenities” (2), “Name brand hotels” (2) and “[Advanced] recreational amenities” (1) located under *Stage 4: Become a Resident*. Only one green dot was placed in *Stage 1: Come and Visit*, and it was for more “Beautification” efforts.

During the discussion, participants noted their strong support for the Main Street Program and its ability to host successful events for the town. However, they felt they needed to have a greater variety of businesses in town and that all needed to offer later hours to attract local shoppers who often commute during the day and would only be available to shop in the evening or on the weekends. The challenge for merchants, however, is to be able to take care of their own families during these times and have sufficient income to support part-time and weekend help. Another

challenge was the availability of a meeting or event pavilion, but it is not accessible or visible to the downtown area.

## Step 2.B: How Shall We Get There?

The second part of assessing their progress toward economic and community vitality was to examine how to move toward where they want to be, and which are most doable in the next 1-3 years. The first step is to identify the “low hanging fruit” for the short-term, and then secondly, which activities are most important, but for the longer term.

Participants were invited to write down their top 3 ideas for each category (Short Term and Long Term). They broke out into three (3) groups, as they were seated at dining tables. Most stayed at their table. Participants were given 10 minutes to brainstorm and reach a consensus. If one person did not agree with their group, they were allowed to place a red dot next to that item. Each person was given a worksheet and one person served as the Recorder for the group.

After an extended discussion (15 minutes), each group identified one member to report out their recommendations. A summary of their recommendations is provided below. Individual group worksheets for Groups 1-3 provide additional detail.

Short Term	<i>Why now?</i>	<i>Impact</i>		Long Term	<i>Why important?</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Attract Investors to the town.	Need for resources	New business creation		Establish a small boutique hotel or B&B.	Maintain the small town charm	Attract visitors overnight; revenue generator
Offer weekend and evening hours for shoppers.	Keeps people in town to shop	Increased revenue retention; more people staying and spending.				
Add new arts & cultural events, e.g., a Greek Festival	Draws people in	More people seen				
Build on BBQ Festival – differentiate its offerings.	Other towns are offering similar events.	Attendance				
Address parking needs, both availability and enforcement of restrictions.	As more events are held, it will be important.	Access		Financial incentives by government, foundations and banks. Ex: new sprinkler systems or low interest loans, etc.	Need to leverage more available resources.	

Explore a Partnership with nearby Clinton, SC; coordinate events, days of week, etc.	Increased competition for resources, visibility, customers and event goers			Explore Regional Economic Development opportunities with Clinton.	Regional efforts are more efficient.	Win, win for both communities
Build nightlife, social options and venues	Attract younger set					

The group was then asked about their local leadership and their role in fostering community and economic development. The response was quite resounding. They stated that there was “zero” leadership response and no progressive change fostered by the city or county council. One of the past issues of contention with the Main Street Program has been the allowance of alcohol consumption at events, such as at the recent “Sip and Stroll” event. Open container beverages were previously not allowed outside, but only inside a restaurant or bar. The group further commented that there was no planning at the city level. While the Main Street Laurens program is planning to underwrite the development of a Community Master Plan, the city has only prepared its state mandated Comprehensive Master Plan in coordination with the County.

When asked what are the top two items you would like the city to help with, the reply was “Funding and Support.” They would like leaders to meet with them to discuss these issues. Another commented, that they should “Get out of the way” because government has been a barrier to progress. Finally, some agreed that they need the city to take a more active role in “Code Enforcement” but it takes funds, political will, and time. To illustrate, one participant commented they have a designated preservation district, but little is done to protect or preserve it.

### Activity 3: About Your Quality of Life

In this final activity, Ms. Crandall invited participants to think about their current Quality of Life as it is “At this time.” She asked everyone to each take another blue dot and place it on the poster with the *Quality of Life Ladder – At This Time* heading, with 00 being the “Worst possible life,” and 10 being the “Best possible life.” Then she asked them to each take a green dot and place it on the *Quality of Life Ladder – In the Future* poster. Given the prospects of today’s discussion, where would they rank themselves on the ladder in the next five years?

The results for the participants’ happiness ratings “At this time” were clustered between scores of 4 to 7. Most gave a rating of 4-5, while two indicated a happiness score of 6, and one of 7. Two participants did not participate. Overall, the group gave themselves an average happiness score of 5 points on a scale of 0-10.

Participant happiness ratings “in the future” then climbed dramatically, as they indicated their expected quality of life anticipated in the next five years. Scores ranged from a low of 8 to a high of 10. Five indicated a score of 9, two of 8, and one of 10. On average, the overall score was 7.89 on a scale of 0-10.

Participants reported that the higher scores in the future are based on the assumption that some of their planned activities will come to fruition. To be successful, they feel they will need to complete their community master plan, recruit more active volunteers and leaders, and solicit more investors in their communities to help them realize their dreams. They wish to build on their strengths in order to succeed. They also recognize the need for the dedicated work of community members, investors, and business owners to help finance and support these beautification, community engagement, and development activities.

### **Intercept Interview Discussions #3: City of Woodruff**

**Date:** December 6-7, 2017

**Location:** 132 South Main Street, Woodruff, SC 29388

**Host:** Humble Grounds Coffee & Tea

**Attendance:** 7 Business leaders

**Duration:** 11 AM – 3PM; 10 AM – 2PM.

### **Introduction**

Sonya Crandall arranged for a focus group discussion to be held at the Humble Grounds Coffee & Tea room on December 6<sup>th</sup> working through the City of Woodruff. Four (4) days prior to the meeting the city's economic development director contacted Ms. Crandall. Feeling they did not have sufficient participation for a focus group they suggested personal interviews or "walk around" visits to the local downtown business owners. The city provided a listing of ten (10) individuals to contact and a downtown map of their business locations. The ten (10) businesses and individuals are: Gaither Ray's, Hip Resale, Zen Garden Spa, Humble Grounds, Frou Boutique, Nevaeh Salon, Woodruff Curb Market, Woodruff Wellness, The Snow Castle, and Jay's Prepaid Wireless. City staff indicated that if additional information was needed they would be able provide email addresses and other follow-up contact information.

Ms. Crandall consulted with the PI and they agreed to follow through on the previously announced date for the focus group. Ms. Crandall prepared ten (10) copies of the focus group / walk around interview discussion questions and the informed consent information. At 11 am on 12/6, Ms. Crandall arrived at the Humble Grounds Coffee shop and used this site as her home base for the walk around interviews. During the interviews, she emphasized the importance of retaining their individual confidentiality and reporting the results in aggregate form. She also stated that the results would be shared with other communities starting out as they seek to undertake local community and economic revitalization activities.

A total of seven (7) business leaders from the downtown and surrounding area participated in the walk around interviews. Representative businesses include: Humble Grounds Coffee & Tea, Zen Garden Spa, Hip Resale, Peachy and Posh clothing boutique, Nevaeh Salon, Jay's Prepaid Wireless, and Palmetto Vermiculite (not downtown, but engaged in downtown property redevelopment).

### **Activity 1: Best and Worst Features of the Area**

As an icebreaker, each discussion began with the participants identifying the features they liked best about their town/area, and what they liked least. Their responses were recorded on paper. Below are their comments in [BLUE](#):

Best Attributes	Challenge Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Community Atmosphere:</u> Neighborly; The People (2); Everyone knows everyone (2); Small town atmosphere; “Friendliest town”; Circle of life; Quaintness of town.</li> <li>• <u>Public Safety:</u> Not having to worry walking down the street at night.</li> <li>• <u>Education:</u> Great schools (2); Some residents fail to take advantage of the educational opportunities; “Outsider” children are not always welcomed.</li> <li>• <u>Cost of Living:</u> Low rental costs, more acreage for the money.</li> <li>• <u>Opportunity for Change:</u> Once people see and experience the change they may change their minds and embrace it; Some richer folks own property but do not actively seek out new businesses, e.g. a Sonic or a bowling alley for youth.</li> <li>• <u>The Town Has Great Potential:</u> Social media can be very effective, but may not reach everyone. It is well located; but it is hard to slow down traffic coming through. They did have their biggest turnout ever for the recent Halloween event.</li> <li>• <u>City Effort:</u> Government leaders at City Council are trying to revitalize. They made several city park improvements; have some new leadership with fresh ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Change Can Be Threatening:</u> Older folks don’t want change (2); Some like it the way it is (old money); Some block or “stop” the community when they see change coming; Some property owners are not engaged the change or don’t understand the value of development.</li> <li>• <u>Employment Opportunities:</u> Not enough good paying jobs/need more companies with higher pay; Need to attract larger businesses to attract more residents and customers; need an anchor (getting a Roses Department Store).</li> <li>• <u>Labor Market:</u> Need reliable help; Some businesses are becoming more automated (robotics) rather than rely on people to show up for work.</li> <li>• <u>Cohesion:</u> Need to come together more as a town now that the mills have closed. Need something to bring them out and socialize together.</li> <li>• <u>Marketing:</u> There is no local newspaper; people have a mindset to go elsewhere; need to shop local; rely heavily on social media but not everyone uses it;</li> <li>• <u>Dilapidated Buildings:</u> Many of the buildings need to be rehabilitated (Greer used to be a sketchy area 10 years ago, and now is a hot spot for restaurants.)</li> <li>• <u>Public Safety:</u> “Broken window syndrome” – run down buildings and vacant areas look bad; attracts the wrong element; drug cases need to be cleaned up.</li> <li>• <u>Planned Growth:</u> Will need to plan for growth so that it is cohesive and attractive growth; about a year away from attracting larger developers but do have two (2) foreign companies coming in nearby.</li> <li>• <u>Food and Beverage:</u> There has been resistance to adult beverage sales at local restaurants.</li> </ul>

#### Discussion

The group generally felt that the city had some key unique assets, such as its historic buildings and strategic location near Greenville, Spartanburg and Simpsonville via major arteries such as US 221 and SC Hwy 101, and I-385 and I-26. The city also has a wonderful small town feel that



locals and visitors enjoy. However, the old timers may not always welcome change. Sometimes long term residents do not welcome newcomers and this happens even among children in the schools. A few business owners expressed concern that residents were not as loyal to the downtown businesses as they might be (e.g. for coffee, dining or shopping) and they were not always aware of what was going on in the town. Without a local newspaper or a large employer with many employees, it can be difficult to regain the cohesion and informal communication channels they once had when they were a mill town. Younger people are gaining leadership positions so some fresh new ideas are being embraced. One young property owner noted that his grandfather was large landowner and was working with his son and grandson to grade some property suitable for industry and construct a strip mall for two restaurants, a meat market, and a pharmacy on Main Street near downtown. The city manager was calling weekly to check on redevelopment progress. Perhaps this strategy of blending old money with the younger generation is resulting a large impact on the community.

### Activity 2.A: Assessing Our Progress Town Economic and Community Vitality

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<i>Come and visit</i>	<i>Come and stay awhile</i>	<i>Stay overnight</i>	<i>Become a resident/invest</i>

Ms. Crandall then invited participants to view a poster board showing a “longitudinal mapping” (or matrix of stages) of a community undergoing growth and development. She asked participants, “Where are we as a Town/Area that is seeking redevelopment and revitalization? Are we in Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, or Stage 4?” She briefly provided examples of development activities at each progressive stage, ending with a fully developed and integrated live/work and play environment.

Participants observed that they share features with each stage, but tend to dominate in in the first stage (Stage 1), with a number of new events and some beautification efforts in the downtown and park areas. The City and County Councils also seem highly motivated to embrace redevelopment. The city park was revitalized with a ball field and a stage, primed and ready for more festivals and local events or gatherings and to serve as a recreational center. There has also been exploration of new single-family homes and to make a connector between the park and downtown for walkability (Stage 4). The challenge has been to fill-in with other items from the other stages, e.g. Stages 2 and 3. Key features often mentioned as missing are overnight hotel accommodations, a bed and breakfast, regular events, arts and cultural events, and other things to do, as well as more variety in the dining options available.

A grant for frontage beautification was recently secured so the anchor stages are coming together, and many noted the next step as housing. Without the “things to do” component, however, industrial development may lead to new housing and residents, but without adding the downtown vibrancy they are looking for. Unless they can build up their Stage 2 components with dining options, outdoor activities, historic sites, and specialty stores they may continue to lack cohesion and could also lose market share as residents go outside the city for recreation and entertainment. One participant recommended that they build on the “Triple Tree” event for model airplanes and add more amenities and places to stay overnight to keep visitors longer. She stated the city needs more downtown events, a concert series in the Park, and a B&B. Another stated she would like to move more toward stage 3 for overnight visitors and add a community college. They need higher

paying jobs and a more educated workforce. An educational institution would help facilitate that level of activity. She felt that festivals and events alone really don't help out local businesses.

Another participant notes that the town needs to "build out" the existing areas rather than "grow out." In the next year they will need to invest in more shops and restaurants in the down town area. Some buildings have been neglected and left empty since the 1970s. One local restaurant, the Turtle, has been vacant since the owner fell ill and passed. She noted that the town is "getting ahead of itself" by investing in parks and outside development, and not strategically prioritizing what needs to be done at the heart of the downtown area.

Still another likes the direction the town is taking, with the Farmer's Market, some beautification of alleyways and other improvements. A recent craft fair was also a success. However, there are no hotels yet, and she viewed more revitalization of the downtown area as needed. One participant felt the next step was jobs, and advanced the idea that they needed more entrepreneurs willing to reinvest in the town.

## Step 2.B: How Shall We Get There?

The second part of assessing their progress toward economic and community vitality was to examine how to move toward where they want to be, and which are most doable in the next 1-3 years. The first step is to identify the "low hanging fruit" for the short-term, and then secondly, which activities are most important, but for the longer term.

### Ease/Impact Mapping

Short Term	Why now?	Impact		Long Term	Why important?	Impact
Set priorities for renovation; Be strategic; prioritize.	Encourages the ability to focus; the town is jumping to housing and trails, to make it a walkable community. There is more to do in the interim.	Creates a cohesive plan of action the town can mobilize around		Renovate specific corners of Downtown area; take over historic buildings. Ex. Turtle Café; assure local ownership; fill vacancies downtown. Insure enforcement.	Improve the overall look; Path to downtown is not necessary; rather see more investment at city core; if take care of buildings now, they may be saved; diversified restaurants and things to do.	Add more restaurants and boutiques; a good steak house; gives people more choices
Add more festivals and events; one large concert with smaller ones; grander marketing.	Build on existing events. Use renovated park amenities. Mostly local attendees.	Attracts more visitors; need to put Woodruff on the map; do stories, remind people; add		Get property owners to <b>lower prices</b> ; generate greater interest in vacant properties	They are asking too much for their property; need to bring more developers to the area; Woodruff has the charm and	Will help encourage more investment; an anchor store will spark additional population

		nice signage about dining, shops, history			talent, just need to build on those assets; needs a spark	growth, job growth (just look at BMW)- Commerce, Customers, and Residents
Get more buildings up to code; enhance the look and feel of the town; and then Market it!	Families have held on a long time; want a more welcoming atmosphere; need to clean up; light up – make it inviting; market to Greenville, Five Forks areas	Add businesses downtown; want to be like Fountain Inn; keep historic character; could be like Simpsonville or Greer; draw from farther		Develop a community college at Town Hall		
Get people involved; develop town pride; bring in new leadership; continue to bring owners together	Younger crowd coming in; add forward thinking Town Council; capitalize on Community Center	Older group resists change, but change is happening; closer connections		Support overnight accommodations	Getting new strip malls that will give people more choices on things to do; but can't do a B&B until there is more to do.	People will stay longer and enjoy the options.
Attract another destination business	Wine Bar draws from outside; need to offer more beer at festivals as well as at local businesses	Invites others to know about “Undiscovered Woodruff”		Control the growth; especially residential; assure mindful growth; but don't be an impediment like County permitting process.	Don't need to many codes, just enough to assure not too many orange homes; developer walking around – assure it is good growth	Assure cohesive, inviting, welcoming look.
Create a Community Service event, e.g. based on “Indy Do Day”	All companies can participate; engages churches and other community groups	Volunteers can add plants, paint a mural, build a bench		Consider roadway narrowing	Traffic zooms by; trucks cut through the town	Encourages people to slow down, visit, see the businesses they are passing

The participants felt that city officials need to be open-minded. Local people talk a lot, but lack action. When they speak, they also lose heart because they are shot down. They also need carrots and sticks. When property is left dormant, there needs to be penalties.

The group was then asked about their local leadership and their role in fostering community and economic development.

### Activity 3: About Your Quality of Life

In this final activity, Ms. Crandall invited participants to think about their current Quality of Life as it is “At this time.” She asked everyone to each take another blue dot and place it on the poster with the *Quality of Life Ladder – At This Time* heading, with 00 being the “Worst possible life,” and 10 being the “Best possible life.” Then she asked them to each take a green dot and place it on the *Quality of Life Ladder – In the Future* poster. Given the prospects of today’s discussion, where would they rank themselves on the ladder in the next five years?

The results for the participants’ happiness ratings “At this time” were clustered between scores of 7 and 10 for themselves. Most gave a rating of 4 to 7 for the Town. One participant did not participate. Overall, the group gave themselves an average happiness score of 8.7 points on a scale of 0-10, and the Town an average score of 5.

Participant happiness ratings “in the future” then climbed dramatically, as they indicated their expected quality of life anticipated in the next five years. Scores ranged from a low of 9 to a high of 10 for themselves. For the city, the range was 7 to 8. On average, the overall score was 9.8 for the participants personally, but 7.1 for the city. Participants reported that the higher scores in the future are based on the assumption that the city is moving in the right direction.

#### Happiness Ratings

Personal		Town	
<i>Current</i>	<i>Future</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Future</i>
8	10	4	7
10	10	4-5	6-7
7	9	5	7
7	10	5	7
10	10	6-7	8
10	10	5	7

#### Town Investment

For the near future and to improve their rankings, participants are looking for greater numbers of restaurants, walkability, and more regular events.

## Measure Success

Keys to success are indicated below:

Increase Connections to Other People	
Increase Personal Health	
Increase in Jobs	1, 1, 1 (Michelin coming)
Increase in Income	
Increase in Overall Ambience (look and feel)	1, 1, 1 (getting better as it grows)
Reduction in Crime	1
Reduction in Uncertainty	

Several also noted is an increase in the *quality* of jobs that is important too, not just quantity. They need trained help; some plants are going to Chester where the city pays for training. The city needs to invest in technical training career opportunities. They also might wish to consider growth and revitalization, not sprawl. “People know Woodruff, just need to get them to stay in Woodruff.” “With good management and with preservation, small becomes large.” Need historic building reinvestment, to offer incentives to businesses, crosswalks and add more parking. The city is close to the tipping point and headed in the right direction, just need better incentives and clear priorities. They lost jobs before, and that is what changed the community. They need to get jobs back. Recognition as a top place to live by an outside party would also be effective, such as Simpsonville’s recent recognition.

## Post Questionnaire

Trust of the city leadership fell somewhere in the middle to lower level. Three trusted the government “only some of the time,” whereas two did “most of the time,” and only one marked “just about always.” One respondent noted that she would like the city leadership to be more proactive and involved. They need to have closer connections to the business community, purchasing goods, providing support and offering a vision for the future. The economic development director does bring them together on a regular basis to discuss events and keep each other up-to-date, share ideas. There are about 10-15 people that meet regularly. One respondent would like to see them market small business opportunities to women. Invite Greenville businesses to open a second location in Woodruff – a spillover effect.

Some also expressed that the new leadership may do better by being more inclusive and taking action. One responded that the mayor calls weekly, and the city manager is young and is actively helping people. The economic development director is also active with the downtown businesses.

Most of the participants are White or Caucasian, with one from India.

In terms of age, one was 23 years of age, two were 25-34, and three were between 45-64 years of age.

Most live just outside of the city, in a nearby city or town such as Five Forks, Spartanburg, Simpsonville or Roebuck. Only one lived in Woodruff on Main Street.

## Focus Group Discussion #4: City of Pickens

**Date:** December 14, 2017

**Location:** Gatehouse Restaurant, 116 Ann Street, Pickens, SC 29671

**Host:** Main Street Laurens and its Merchant Group

**Attendance:** 4 Community Members

**Duration:** 12 Noon – 1:30 PM

### Introduction

Sonya Crandall, Facilitator, thanked those present for attending today's focus group discussion. Ms. Crandall introduced herself and Dr. Catherine Mobley, Co-Investigator for the study. She noted that she is a graduate student at Clemson University and conducting a study called "Community Voices." The study is designed to assess what local community members view as having the potential to improve their quality of life as their towns undergo economic revitalization. The study is being conducted in four communities in the Upstate, and the results will be shared with other towns beginning their efforts to revitalize.

Ms. Crandall also went over some essential information. She distributed the informed consent information and noted that their individual comments would be kept confidential. All results will be reported in aggregate form and that discussion and provision of information is at their option. Dr. Mobley then began with an icebreaker .

### Activity 1: Best and Worst Features of the Area

As an icebreaker, the group discussion began with participants introducing themselves, and then identifying the features they liked best about their town/area, and what they liked least. Their responses were written on a flip chart. Below are their comments in BLUE:

Best Attributes	Challenge Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>The People:</u> People are friendly; there is camaraderie; sense of family and community.</li><li>• <u>Growth Potential:</u> There is potential for residential growth, but they need resources. There is a spillover effect of being in Pickens County – This is a growth opportunity.</li><li>• <u>Leadership Attitude:</u> The leadership is willing to change; they are "Pro Business" (but not all agree).</li><li>• <u>Small Town Atmosphere:</u> Prefer the small town feel. (Retired from FL; family here.)</li><li>• <u>Location / Come To, Not Through:</u> The City's location is a strength. There are several recreational opportunities here. Have Hwy 11; People pass through; <u>Need to give</u></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>City is Insulated:</u> Main Street Program just focuses on downtown, but needs to go beyond that.</li><li>• <u>Secrecy/Lack of Transparency by Leadership:</u> Town leadership works in "secret." They say "We're behind you," but may not always be.</li><li>• <u>Lack of Civic Engagement:</u> Community is not invited by the city to be involved in local decision making; nor is the Main Street Program invited. Example: The Entrepreneurship Center was shut down (after a year or so in operation); There was no communication as to why it closed down. There were products developed there.</li><li>• <u>Plan for the Future:</u> Don't see a plan for the future. Need a plan with an integrated whole.</li></ul>

<p><u>them a reason to stop</u> on their way to the mountains. Not like Greenville – done that. Want people to “come to, not through” here. They could offer parks, zip lines, crafts, etc. Hagood Mill does this latter offering well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Work Ethic</u>: The people have a strong work ethic that goes back to the days of the early mills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Lack of Sufficient Population</u>: The population size doesn’t support more restaurant growth, as of yet.</li> <li>• <u>Bed and Breakfast Area of Greenville</u>: Could be a B&amp;B of Greenville, but needs to grow and expand in an appropriate way; needs cohesion, not sprawl.</li> </ul>
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The small town atmosphere and location are the leading positive attributes of the city, according to the participants. The city has a lot of potential, given a) its location in the Upstate, b) its access to a number of natural amenities, and 3) the people that flow through the town. However, the lack of a cohesive plan, and the lack of transparency in local decision making, seem to hinder the city setting a course for the future that all can buy-in to and trust for their future.

#### Activity 2.A: Assessing Our Progress Town Economic and Community Vitality

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<i>Come and visit</i>	<i>Come and stay awhile</i>	<i>Stay overnight</i>	<i>Become a resident/invest</i>

Ms. Crandall invited participants to view a poster board showing a “longitudinal mapping” (or matrix of stages) of a community undergoing growth and development. She asked participants, “Where are we as a Town/Area that is seeking redevelopment and revitalization? Are we in Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, or Stage 4?” She briefly provided examples of development activities at each progressive stage, ending with a fully developed and integrated live/work and play environment.

Participants were asked to take four blue dots and place them next to where they feel their town is “at this time.” Then they were to take two green dots and place them next to the items where they felt they would most “like to be” in the next three to five years.

The results were spread widely across all four stages, albeit there were some clear areas of emphasis. The group overwhelmingly placed their blue dots (where they are now) in *Stage 1: Come and Visit*. The marked items under this stage were “Festivals,” and “Signature events,” “Season of events,” “Town cleanup,” and “Beautification.” In *State 2: Come and Stay Awhile*, they also collectively marked “Specialty stores,” “Historic sites,” “Outdoor activities,” and “Trail system” given their new Doodle Trail. In *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*, they also marked to provision of a few “Specialty tours” and “Arts & cultural offerings” as provided by the local Arts Center.

Placement of votes for the green dots of where they “would like to be” revealed another story. They did not mark any of the items in *Stage 1*. Most of their dots were placed in *and Stage 2: Come and Stay Awhile*, and *Stage 3: Stay Overnight*. The leading features included “Bed & breakfast” accommodations or “Boutique hotels. They also wanted to see more “2-day events,” “Weekend activities,” and “Weekend/evening hours” necessary for visitors to enjoy these longer stays. They added in “Air B&Bs” of which they are aware of at least one in town. For *Stage 2*, they also wrote-in “Visible and Accessible Parking,” and better management of “Traffic flow.”

For *Stage Four: Become a Resident*, the participants wanted to see Pickens become more of a “Walkable community” with less heavy traffic to navigate. In addition, they wanted to see more recreational amenities such as those mentioned during the icebreaker. They incorporated to the listings the importance of bringing in more “Industry and growth” and the need for “Planning and zoning.” This latter topic underscores the lack of a cohesive and jointly shared plan for the future. Participants specifically mentioned the presence of “doublewides” as a reason to address zoning and enforcement issues.

During the discussion, one of the members observed that there is no silver bullet. They need a collection of these activities. Another major hurdle is the presence of dilapidated buildings. Participants viewed this problem as a big issue, with many of the buildings filled with asbestos and other contaminants that can drive up the cost of rehabilitation. They also reflected upon Greenville, and adjured, “Just look at Greenville. They did several things to jumpstart it again. When they tried something, they then looked back and see what worked.” The leadership in Pickens had a missed opportunity when they did not develop the Doodle Train. Now they have the Doodle Trail. The participants expressed their hope that the leadership will capitalize on it, to benefit the town.

## Step 2.B: How Shall We Get There?

The second part of assessing their progress toward economic and community vitality was to examine how to move toward where they want to be, and which are most doable in the next 1-3 years. The first step is to identify the “low hanging fruit” for the short-term, and then secondly, which activities are most important, but for the longer term.

When considering the city’s next step over the next 1-3 years, and then 4-5 years and beyond in the longer term, the group provided the following responses.

Short Term	<i>Why now?</i>	<i>Impact</i>		Long Term	<i>Why important?</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Amusement Park	Adds more activities; Need an investor	Attracts people; reason to stop		First stage is strong; Need to move forward to others	Move to façade grants to improve look and feel of town	
Focus on what they have already and market it; e.g. a shop local campaign, PR	They have many wonderful natural assets	Emphasizes convenience, customer service, support local businesses				
Offer classes and crafts				Redevelopment of old industrial sites (e.g. Ryobi [super fund site], Sangarno,	Fear of failure and risk adverse; Lack of access to capital	Opportunity to attract workers and new residents



			Brunswick Mill)		
More restaurant diversity; sidewalk restaurants	A reason to go out and stay in town		Provide reasons to not go to Greenville, but rather visit Pickens.	Want to attract people, dining options, and recreation	Potential to offer a vibrant nightlife
Make Pickens a business friendly town			Need more like Coyote Coffee; but there is a need for capital	Coyote Coffee had a business plan; Many businesses start out with inadequate capital and insufficient business plans	Attracts a different crowd
Increase education					
Offer a Main Street Challenge					
Launch a planning effort to “Pull a Plan Together”; Harness local planning dollars into an Economic Dev. Plan.	Leadership inertia; Need better infrastructure; Untie hands of Main St Program; City and Pickens Revitalization Association (PRA) are not on same plane.	Cohesive direction; better able to work together; creates a new energy			
Broaden civic engagement / leadership	Leadership is aging; Need to recruit young leaders. Long-term merchants attitude is “Been there, done that.” Need civic engagement of businesses.	Bring in fresh ideas; new energy (“We are running out of energy” – older leaders)			
Leadership styles have changed; New leaders have different skillsets	City Manager and PRA Director need to come together; City and Main Street Program do not cooperate.	Forge complementary working relationships			
Learn from other groups such as seniors that created a	Embraced a shared central mission, were focused, and recruited	Shared goal/objective shared by Town			

new Senior Center	leadership to meet and help lead.	leadership and business community.			
Break the cycle of indecision of who leads. Sell an objective / goal to the leadership. Start small with something everyone can get behind. E.g., support small local businesses.	City is looking to Main Street Program for leadership, and visa versa. Need to identify how to break the cycle. Some businesses are not interested in a collective mission.	Builds trust and mutual respect.			
Build on location as Pickens is “positioned for the future.”	The surrounding community has grown a great deal with the Reserve (a Cliffs Community).	Growth and vibrancy.			

### Activity 3: About Your Quality of Life

In the final activity, Ms. Crandall invited participants to think about their current Quality of Life as it is “At this time.” She asked everyone to each take a green dot and place it on the poster with the *Quality of Life Ladder – At This Time* heading, with 00 being the “Worst possible life,” and 10 being the “Best possible life.” Then she asked them to each take a blue dot and place it where the community is at this time. The same was done with dots on the *Quality of Life Ladder – In the Future* poster. Given the prospects of today’s discussion, where would they rank themselves on the ladder in the next five years?

The results for the participants’ happiness ratings “At this time” were clustered between scores of 4 (due to health issues) to a high of 8 (based on a strong preference for rural living). The overall average was 6.5 for the participants. For the community ratings, scores ranged from 2 to 6, with an average of 4.5, reflecting their higher overall personal life scores over the community’s.

Participant personal happiness ratings “in the future” then climbed to an 8 or 9, but there were many caveats mentioned. They generally felt they would move to the next step but were hesitate about the community. Scores for the community ranged from 5 to 7.5 for an overall score of 6.7. They felt there would need to be a different tone in the community. The future of the town was viewed as resting on leadership and highly dependent on what they do. They hoped that they would continue on with about the same pace, even with economic fluctuations. Only incremental change would be accomplished unless people brought some fresh ideas and were able to create an agreed upon Master Plan. They have some many issues that need addressing: parking, zoning, traffic flow, new business attraction, and programming, etc. They may raise themselves up 2-3 rings on the scale, if these are addressed. One of the problems is that the city limits are very tight, and community volunteers don’t always reside in the city and have the ability to vote on the

leadership that is coming in to guide the city. Many of the nicer residences are outside the incorporated area (and may represent a more educated and informed or progressive electorate).

#### Post Questionnaire

Half felt their perspective changed as a result of the discussion and half did not. One noted that he/she liked the description of the stages.

Most felt that they could envision ways for the community members to work together. The key would be to organize a core group of people who will create plan for Pickens and what they want Pickens to be.

All were willing to help, but at least one felt somewhat tapped out due to prior devotion of time.

Leadership was expressed as a concern during the focus group, but the participants do feel they can trust their leaders “most of the time.” Only one response was “only some of the time.”

The participants in this focus group were ages 55 and older. Some expressed during the discussion that they were in their 70s and recognized the need for more young people to be engaged.

The respondents did not reside in the city limits of Pickens; three lived just outside the city and one resided in Easley. One, however, did own and operate a local business in town.

## Appendix H

### Longitudinal Mapping of Progress Toward Economic and Community Vitality - Results

#### Where They Are

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Come and visit	Come and stay awhile	Stay overnight	Become a resident
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Festivals (Wi:13), (L:10), (P)</li> <li>Signature events (Wi:9), (L:2) (Wo), (P)</li> <li>Park activities (Wi:11)</li> <li>Special sales events</li> <li>Season of events (Wi:8), (L:6), (P)</li> <li>Recreational amenities (Wi:3, (L:3)</li> <li>Town cleanup (Wi:4), (L:2), (P)</li> <li>Beautification (Wi:4), (L:2) (Wo), (P)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Street sales to partner with major Park events</li> <li>Food truck rodeos (Wi:1)</li> <li>Specialty stores (P)</li> <li>Multiple dining venues</li> <li>Historic sites (Wi:2), (P)</li> <li>Outdoor activities (P)</li> <li>Trail system (Wi:1), (P)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boutique hotels</li> <li>Bed &amp; breakfasts</li> <li>2-day events</li> <li>Weekend activities</li> <li>Specialty tours (P)</li> <li>Arts &amp; cultural offerings (P)</li> <li>Visitor attractions</li> <li>Weekend / evening hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed-use housing</li> <li>Single family homes (Wo), (L:2)</li> <li>Walkable community (Wo), (L:2)</li> <li>Cultural amenities</li> <li>Expanded /Advanced recreational amenities (Wo), (L:3)</li> <li>Name brand hotels</li> </ul>

Where They Want To Be

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Come and visit	Come and stay awhile	Stay overnight	Become a resident
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals</li> <li>• Signature events (Wo)</li> <li>• Park activities (Wo)</li> <li>• Special sales events</li> <li>• Season of events</li> <li>• Recreational amenities</li> <li>• Town cleanup</li> <li>• Beautification (L:1)</li> <li>• <i>Slow growth plan (P)</i></li> <li>• <i>Address zoning and code enforcement (P)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street sales to partner with major Park events</li> <li>• Food truck rodeos (Wi:3), (L:2)</li> <li>• Specialty stores (Wi:2), (Wo)</li> <li>• Multiple dining venues (Wi:6), (L:3), (Wo)</li> <li>• Historic sites (Wo)</li> <li>• Outdoor activities (Wi:6), (Wo)</li> <li>• Trail system (Wi:2)</li> <li>• <i>Outdoor pavilion (L:2)</i></li> <li>• <i>Address vacant and dilapidated buildings</i></li> <li>• <i>Expand parking (P)</i></li> <li>• <i>Slow traffic flow (P)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boutique hotels (L:2)</li> <li>• Bed &amp; breakfasts (Wi:5), (L:4), (Wo), (P)</li> <li>• 2-day events (Wo), (P)</li> <li>• Weekend activities (P)</li> <li>• Specialty tours (L:2)</li> <li>• Arts &amp; cultural offerings (Wi:2), (L:3)</li> <li>• Visitor attractions (Wi:4), (L:2)</li> <li>• Weekend / evening hours (Wi:2), (L:3), (P)</li> <li>• <i>Small businesses assistance (L:2)</i></li> <li>• <i>Buttress infrastructure</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop incentive structure</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-use housing</li> <li>• Single family homes</li> <li>• Walkable community (P)</li> <li>• Cultural amenities (L:2)</li> <li>• Expanded /Advanced recreational amenities (L:4), (P)</li> <li>• Name brand hotels (Wi:1), (L:2)</li> <li>• <i>Promote job growth and industry development (Wo), (P)</i></li> <li>• <i>Recruit investors (Wi), (L), (Wo)</i></li> <li>• <i>Community college (Wo)</i></li> </ul>

Notes:

- (1) Dot Placement: **Blue** Dots for “Where They Are at This Time”; **Green** Dots for “Where They Would Like To Be”
- (2) L= Laurens; P= Pickens; Wi = Williamston; and Wo = Woodruff.
- (3) Numbers denote the actual dots placed next to each item; however, for some cities the numbers were not recorded due to the small group size.
- (4) Italics denote participants’ “write in” items.

## Appendix I

### Revised Longitudinal Mapping Instrument

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Come and visit	Come and stay awhile	Stay overnight	Become a resident
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festivals</li> <li>• Signature events</li> <li>• Park activities</li> <li>• Special sales events</li> <li>• Season of events</li> <li>• Recreational amenities</li> <li>• Town cleanup</li> <li>• Beautification</li> <li>• <i>Slow growth plan*</i></li> <li>• <i>Address zoning and code enforcement</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street sales to partner with major Park events</li> <li>• Food truck rodeos</li> <li>• Specialty stores</li> <li>• Multiple dining venues</li> <li>• Historic sites</li> <li>• Outdoor activities</li> <li>• Trail system</li> <li>• <i>Outdoor pavilion</i></li> <li>• <i>Address vacant and dilapidated buildings</i></li> <li>• <i>Expand parking</i></li> <li>• <i>Slow traffic flow</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boutique hotels</li> <li>• Bed &amp; breakfasts</li> <li>• 2-day events</li> <li>• Weekend activities</li> <li>• Specialty tours</li> <li>• Arts &amp; cultural offerings</li> <li>• Visitor attractions</li> <li>• Weekend / evening hours</li> <li>• <i>Small business assistance</i></li> <li>• <i>Buttress infrastructure</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop incentive structure</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-use housing</li> <li>• Single family homes</li> <li>• Walkable community</li> <li>• Cultural amenities</li> <li>• Expanded /Advanced recreational amenities</li> <li>• Name brand hotels</li> <li>• <i>Promote job growth and industry development</i></li> <li>• <i>Recruit investors</i></li> <li>• <i>Community college</i></li> </ul>

\*Italicized items denote items added by focus group participants.

## Appendix J

### Community Voices Survey – ANOVA Analysis

*Question 1. What are your reasons for choosing to live and / or work in Town? Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

Variable	% / Mean	95% CI	Mean Square	F Ratio	Prob>F or t
<b>A. Quality of Life</b>					
<i>Age</i>			0.4127	2.3557	0.0243
No Response	0.1964	[.09, .31]			
18 to 24	0.1667	[-.17, .50]			
25 to 34	0.1622	[.03, .30]			
35 to 44	0.1607	[.05, .27]			
45 to 54	0.2813	[.14, .43]			
55 to 64	0.3214	[.17, .48]			
65 to 74	0.5625	[.36, .77]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.09, .91]			
<i>Children in HH</i>			0.5605	3.1307	0.0455
No Response	0.2000	[.09, .31]			
No Children	0.3294	[.24, .42]			
With Children	0.1789	[.09, .26]			
<i>Property Owner</i>			1.2753	7.181	0.0079
No	0.2000	[.14, .26]			
Yes	0.3800	[.26, .50]			
<b>B. Cost of Living</b>					
<i>Age</i>			0.3913	2.144	0.0402
No Response	0.1607	[.05, .27]			
18 to 24	0.0000	[-.34, .34]			
25 to 34	0.3243	[.19, .46]			
35 to 44	0.3929	[.28, .51]			
45 to 54	0.2500	[.10, .40]			
55 to 64	0.1429	[-.02, .30]			
65 to 74	0.2500	[.04, .46]			
75 or older	0.0000	[-.42, .42]			



*Question 5. Which of the following business attraction, expansion, and retention activities should your local government or economic development organization pursue? Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

Variable	% / Mean	95% CI	Mean Square	F Ratio	Prob>F or t
<b>A. Vacant/Underutilized Buildings</b>					
<i>Resident of Town</i>			2.4712	12.7976	0.0004
No	0.6000	[.51, .69]			
Yes	0.8074	[.73, .88]			
<b>B. Main Street Challenge</b>					
<i>Age</i>			0.6680	3.0416	0.0045
No Response	0.1607	[.04, .28]			
18 to 24	0.6667	[.29, 1.04]			
25 to 34	0.4324	[.28, .58]			
35 to 44	0.3571	[.23, .48]			
45 to 54	0.5625	[.40, .73]			
55 to 64	0.4643	[.29, .64]			
65 to 74	0.3125	[.08, .54]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-.21, .71]			
<b>C. Speculative Buildings</b>					
<i>Age</i>			0.4253	1.9516	0.0627
No Response	0.3036	[.18, .43]			
18 to 24	0.1667	[-.21, .54]			
25 to 34	0.2432	0.09, .39]			
35 to 44	0.5179	[.39, .64]			
45 to 54	0.2500	[.09, .41]			
55 to 64	0.2500	[.08, .42]			
65 to 74	0.3750	[.15, .60]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.04, .96]			
<b>D. Pop-up Shops</b>					
<i>Age</i>					
No Response		[-.03, .18]	0.4204	2.6202	0.0128
18 to 24	0.1667	[-.16, .49]			
25 to 34	0.3243	[.19, .45]			
35 to 44	0.2857	[.18, .39]			
45 to 54	0.3438	[.20, .48]			

55 to 64	0.1429	[-.01, .29]			
65 to 74	0.0625	[-.13, .26]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-.14, .64]			
D. Pop-up Shops Continued			1.8147	11.2613	0.0009
<i>Black or African-American</i>					
No	0.1974	[.14, .25]			
Yes	0.7143	[.42, 1.01]			
<i>Gender</i>			1.1300	6.0079	0.0152
Female	0.3300	[.24, .42]			
Male	0.1688	[.07, .27]			
E. One-stop Shops					
<i>Black or African-American</i>			1.3937	12.7263	0.0004
No	0.1184	[.08, .16]			
Yes	0.5714	[.33, .82]			
F. Drop-ins					
<i>Children in HH</i>			0.2991	3.1917	0.0429
No Response	0.0182	[-.06, .10]			
No Children	0.1176	[.05, .18]			
With Children	0.1474	[.09, .21]			

*Question 6. Which of the following marketing strategies do you feel are most needed or beneficial to promote the Town to prospective business owners and visitors? Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

Variable	% / Mean	95% CI	Mean Square	F Ratio	Prob>F or t
A. First Friday Events					
<i>Age</i>			1.2649	5.8456	<.0001
No Response	0.2679	[.15, .39]			
18 to 24	0.8333	[.46, 1.21]			
25 to 34	0.6757	[.52, .83]			
35 to 44	0.7679	[.65, .89]			
45 to 54	0.6250	[.46, .79]			
55 to 64	0.5357	[.36, .71]			
65 to 74	0.3750	[.15, .60]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.04, .96]			

#### B. Buy Local Campaign

<i>Age</i>			0.8343	3.8485	0.0006
No Response	0.1429	[.02, .27]			
18 to 24	0.5000	[.13, .87]			
25 to 34	0.5405	[.39, .69]			
35 to 44	0.5357	[.41, .66]			
45 to 54	0.3125	[.15, .47]			
55 to 64	0.3214	[.15, .49]			
65 to 74	0.3750	[.15, .60]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.04, .96]			

#### C. Mobile App

<i>Age</i>			0.5862	2.7525	0.0092
No Response	0.1964	[.07, .32]			
18 to 24	0.3333	[-.04, .70]			
25 to 34	0.5405	[.39, .69]			
35 to 44	0.3571	[.24, .48]			
45 to 54	0.4688	[.31, .63]			
55 to 64	0.2857	[.11, .46]			
65 to 74	0.1875	[-.04, .41]			
75 or older	0.0000	[-.45, .45]			

#### D. Billboards and Wayfinding Signs

<i>Property Owner</i>			0.6903	4.4304	0.0364
No	0.1676	[.11, .22]			
Yes	0.3000	[.19, .41]			

#### E. Welcome Center

<i>Age</i>			0.4978	3.0533	0.0043
No Response	0.0893	[-.02, .20]			
18 to 24	0.3333	[.01, .66]			
25 to 34	0.1892	[.06, .32]			
35 to 44	0.2321	[.13, .34]			
45 to 54	0.2500	[.11, .39]			
55 to 64	0.2143	[.06, .36]			
65 to 74	0.5000	[.30, .70]			
75 or older	0.7500	[.35, 1.15]			
<i>Children in HH</i>			0.9858	5.9373	0.0031
No Response	0.0909	[-.02, .20]			
No Children	0.3294	[.24, .42]			

With Children	0.2000	[.12, .28]			
<i>A Worker in Town</i>			0.6283	3.6723	0.0565
No	0.1958	[.14, .26]			
Yes	0.3261	[.21, .45]			
F. Electronic Message Board					
<i>Children in HH</i>			0.4001	3.8901	0.0218
No Response	0.0182	[-.07, .10]			
No Children	0.1294	[.06, .20]			
With Children	0.1684	[.10, .23]			
G. Promotional Materials					
<i>Black or African-American</i>			0.4659	3.2517	0.0726
No	0.1667	[.12, .22]			
Yes	0.4286	[.15, .71]			

*Question 7. Which of the following activities should your local government or economic development organization pursue to make the Town a more desirable and attractive place to live and work? Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

Variable	% / Mean	95% CI	Mean Square	F Ratio	Prob>F or t
A. Building Façade Improvement					
<i>Age</i>			1.9007	11.3192	<.0001
No Response	0.2857	[.18, .39]			
18 to 24	1.0000	[.67, 1.33]			
25 to 34	0.8919	[.76, 1.02]			
35 to 44	0.8214	[.71, .93]			
45 to 54	0.7813	[.64, .92]			
55 to 64	0.7500	[.60, .90]			
65 to 74	0.6875	[.49, .89]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-.15, .65]			
B. Neighborhood Revitalization					
<i>Age</i>			0.9828	4.3664	0.0001
No Response	0.2679	[.14, .39]			
18 to 24	0.5000	[.19, .88]			
25 to 34	0.6757	[.52, .83]			

35 to 44	0.6071	[.48, .73]
45 to 54	0.7188	[.55, .88]
55 to 64	0.6071	[.43, .78]
65 to 74	0.7500	[.52, .98]
75 or older	0.5000	[.03, .97]

#### C. Banners, Attractive Gateways, and Streetscapes

##### Age

No Response	0.1250	[.01, .24]	0.6404	3.2255	0.0028
18 to 24	0.5000	[.14, .86]			
25 to 34	0.3514	[.21, .50]			
35 to 44	0.4821	[.36, .60]			
45 to 54	0.3125	[.16, .47]			
55 to 64	0.2143	[.05, .38]			
65 to 74	0.1875	[-.03, .41]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.06, .94]			

#### D. Public Art Displays

##### Age

No Response	0.0714	[-0.04, .18]	0.5651	3.1497	0.0034
18 to 24	0.0000	[-0.34, .34]			
25 to 34	0.2973	[.16, .43]			
35 to 44	0.3750	[.26, .49]			
45 to 54	0.4063	[.26, .55]			
55 to 64	0.2500	[.09, .41]			
65 to 74	0.1875	[-.02, .40]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-.17, .67]			

##### Children in HH

No Response	0.0727	[-.04, .18]	1.52737	8.5127	0.0003
No Children	0.2471	[.16, .34]			
With Children	0.3684	[.28, .45]			

#### E. Community Parks and Gardens

##### Age

No Response	0.0536	[-.05, .16]	0.49471	3.0326	0.0046
18 to 24	0.5000	[.18, .82]			

25 to 34	0.3514	[.22, .48]			
35 to 44	0.3036	[.20, .41]			
45 to 54	0.1875	[.05, .33]			
55 to 64	0.1786	[.03, .33]			
65 to 74	0.1875	[-0.01, .39]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.10, .90]			
<i>Black or African-American</i>			0.8846	5.2036	0.0234
No	0.2105	[.16, .26]			
Yes	0.5714	[.26, .88]			
<i>Children in HH</i>			1.7364	10.8813	<.0001
No Response	0.0545	[-0.06, .16]			
No Children	0.1765	[.09, .26]			
With Children	0.3579	[.28, .44]			
F. Performing Arts Center					
<i>Children in HH</i>			0.5635	4.3507	0.0140
No Response	0.0545	[-0.04, .15]			
No Children	0.1412	[.06, .22]			
With Children	0.2316	[.16, .30]			
G. Historic Markers					
<i>Children in HH</i>			0.3807	3.2861	0.0391
No Response	0.0909	[0.00, .18]			
No Children	0.2118	[.14, .28]			
With Children	0.0947	[.03, .16]			

*Question 8. Which health and wellness programs should your local government or economic development organization promote in order to encourage healthy lifestyles and high quality of life? Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

Variable	% / Mean	95% CI	Mean Square	F Ratio	Prob>F or t
A. Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails					
Age			0.8906	3.8562	0.0006
No Response	0.2500	[.12, .38]			

18 to 24	0.5000	[.11, .89]			
25 to 34	0.5676	[.41, .72]			
35 to 44	0.5893	[.46, .72]			
45 to 54	0.6250	[.46, .79]			
55 to 64	0.6786	[.50, .86]			
65 to 74	0.6875	[.45, .92]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-0.22, .72]			
<i>A Worker in Town</i>			1.3700	5.5712	0.0191
No	0.4815	[.41, .55]			
Yes	0.6739	[.53, .82]			
 <i>B. Farmer's Market</i>					
<i>Age</i>			1.4561	6.8194	<.0001
No Response	0.1607	[.04, .28]			
18 to 24	0.5000	[.13, .87]			
25 to 34	0.5135	[.36, .66]			
35 to 44	0.5893	[.47, .71]			
45 to 54	0.4063	[.25, .57]			
55 to 64	0.7857	[.61, .96]			
65 to 74	0.6875	[.46, .92]			
75 or older	0.7500	[.29, 1.21]			
 <i>C. Gym or Fitness Center</i>					
<i>Age</i>			1.5007	7.0963	<.0001
No Response	0.1964	[.07, .32]			
18 to 24	0.8333	[.46, 1.20]			
25 to 34	0.7297	[.58, .88]			
35 to 44	0.6607	[.54, .78]			
45 to 54	0.4375	[.28, .60]			
55 to 64	0.3214	[.15, .49]			
65 to 74	0.3750	[.15, .60]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-.20, .70]			
<i>Children in HH</i>			3.4337	15.4251	<.0001
No Response	0.2000	[.07, .33]			
No Children	0.4471	[.35, .55]			
With Children	0.6421	[.55, .74]			
 <i>D. Community Pool</i>					
<i>Age</i>			0.4664	2.6192	0.0128
No Response	0.1071	[-.00, .22]			
18 to 24	0.5000	[.16, .84]			
25 to 34	0.4324	[.30, .57]			

35 to 44	0.2500	[.14, .36]			
45 to 54	0.3125	[.17, .46]			
55 to 64	0.1786	[.02, .34]			
65 to 74	0.2500	[.04, .46]			
75 or older	0.0000	[-.42, .42]			
E. Parks and Children's Facilities					
<i>Age</i>			0.5039	2.4645	0.0187
No Response	0.1250	[.01, .24]			
18 to 24	0.1667	[-.20, .53]			
25 to 34	0.3514	[.20, .50]			
35 to 44	0.4107	[.29, .53]			
45 to 54	0.3438	[.19, .50]			
55 to 64	0.2500	[.08, .42]			
65 to 74	0.5000	[.28, .72]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.05, .95]			
F. Sports Complex					
<i>Age</i>			0.3754	2.2843	0.0288
No Response	0.0536	[-.05, .16]			
18 to 24	0.1667	[-.16, .49]			
25 to 34	0.2973	[.17, .43]			
35 to 44	0.2500	[.14, .36]			
45 to 54	0.3750	[.23, .52]			
55 to 64	0.2143	[.06, .37]			
65 to 74	0.1875	[-.01, .39]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-.15, .65]			
<i>Business Owner</i>			0.7319	4.3504	0.0381
No	0.2000	[.14, .26]			
Yes	0.4000	[.22, .58]			

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*Question 9. Which community engagement programs should your local government or economic development organization pursue to encourage community involvement? Please mark your top three (3) choices.*

Variable	% / Mean	95% CI	Mean Square	F Ratio	Prob>F or t
<b>A. Community Events and Parades</b>					
<i>Age</i>			2.0899	11.9722	<.0001
No Response	0.2143	[.10, .32]			
18 to 24	0.6667	[.33, 1.00]			
25 to 34	0.7838	[.65, .92]			
35 to 44	0.8750	[.76, .99]			
45 to 54	0.6563	[.51, .80]			
55 to 64	0.7500	[.59, .91]			
65 to 74	0.7500	[.54, .96]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.09, .91]			
<b>B. Local Contests</b>					
<i>Age</i>			1.5157	7.1661	<.0001
No Response	0.1607	[.04, .28]			
18 to 24	0.5000	[.13, .87]			
25 to 34	0.7297	[.58, .88]			
35 to 44	0.6071	[.49, .73]			
45 to 54	0.5625	[.40, .72]			
55 to 64	0.6071	[.44, .78]			
65 to 74	0.7500	[.52, .98]			
75 or older	0.7500	[.30, 1.20]			
<i>Property Owner</i>			3.5553	15.0436	0.0001
No	0.4595	[.39, .53]			
Yes	0.7600	[.62, .90]			
<b>C. Movie Nights</b>					
<i>Age</i>			1.1818	5.4105	<.0001
No Response	0.1964	[.07, .32]			
18 to 24	0.6667	[.29, 1.04]			
25 to 34	0.6486	[.50, .80]			
35 to 44	0.6071	[.48, .73]			
45 to 54	0.4688	[.31, .63]			
55 to 64	0.2143	[.04, .39]			
65 to 74	0.4375	[.21, .67]			
75 or older	0.5000	[.04, .96]			
<i>Gender</i>			3.8983	16.9356	<.0001*
Female	0.6500	[.56, .74]			
Male	0.3506	[.24, .46]			

<i>Children in HH</i>			2.5017	10.9813	<.0001
No Response	0.2000	[.07, .33]			
No Children	0.4353	[.33, .54]			
With Children	0.5789	[.48, .68]			
D. Bike Clubs and/or Friends of the Park					
<i>Age</i>			0.7636	3.6310	0.0010
No Response	0.1429	[.02, .26]			
18 to 24	0.3333	[-0.04, .70]			
25 to 34	0.4324	[.28, .58]			
35 to 44	0.5000	[.38, .62]			
45 to 54	0.5000	[.34, .66]			
55 to 64	0.2143	[.04, .39]			
65 to 74	0.2500	[.02, .48]			
75 or older	0.2500	[-0.20, .70]			
<i>Children in HH</i>			1.6479	7.6795	0.0006
No Response	0.1455	[.02, .27]			
No Children	0.3529	[.25, .45]			
With Children	0.4526	[.36, .55]			

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CI = Confidence Interval.  
HH= Household.